

INTRODUCTION

Four years and four months

Time and again, the month of November seems to be of fateful significance for Germany.

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, on November 9, 1938, the Kristallnacht pogroms occurred, and on the same day in 1923, the Hitler putsch in Munich failed.

On November 11, 1918, in the French forest of Compiegne, an event happened that has been decisive not only for Germany, but for the whole world until today. Here is its prehistory, concealed until today.

Even in the summer of 1918, nothing looked like a quick end to the material war that had already been raging for 4 years and was later rightly called the "primordial catastrophe of Europe".

The German Empire had fought fiercely for four and a half years before - to the complete surprise of its wartime opponents - it gave up the fight within a few weeks in the fall of 1918.

Since 2014, with the resurgence of interest in World War I, almost "revolutionary" things have been written about the real culprits in the outbreak of the war.

In contrast, the circumstances of the war's outcome, which still affect our lives today, still seem to be shrouded in a cloak of silence. This is no coincidence!

As planned by the international elite, Germany's economic boom came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of war on August 1, 1914.

The imperial period after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 was a heyday of the German nation. Bismarck had forged the "Second Reich" with blood and iron. After the founding of the empire, magnificent buildings

sprouted up everywhere, the middle classes flourished, and the country appeared self-confident, glamorous, patriotic and progressive. The development accelerated with the accession to power of the young monarch Wilhelm II.

The economy of the German Empire had previously seized almost all of the technologies of the future at the expense of the traditional European economic powers. Bayer, BASF and Hoechst alone held more chemical and pharmaceutical patents than the rest of the world. On the global maritime trade routes, which the Americans and the British thought they had safely leased for themselves, steamships under the flag of the Hamburg shipping company HAPAG appeared more and more frequently.

The promising oil fields of the Middle East also threatened to fall into German hands.

In fact, between 1890 and 1914, Wilhelm II's empire experienced an economic boom that was only surpassed in the 1950s and 1960s. It was reverently referred to as the "good old days" for generations afterward.

Envy and resentment therefore ruled the roost in the secret circles of Europe and the USA - even decades before the war began. Thus, the following statement can be found in the influential London elite newspaper *Saturday Review* of September 11, 1897:

States have been at war for years over a city or a right of succession to the throne, and we shouldn't be at war when an annual trade of 5 billion is at stake?

Lord Balfour, the former prime minister of England, told U.S. diplomat White in 1910:

We are probably foolish not to find a reason to declare war on Germany before she builds too many ships and takes away our trade.

In August 1914, the time had come! The aim of the "Entente", as the united opponents of the Kaiserreich called themselves, was that Germany's times as a leading, modern and flourishing scientific and economic power should finally be over.

At the end of the war, they wanted to see the prosperous country in the

center of Europe transformed into a rural wasteland - similar to the later plans of U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau in 1944.

The *Financial News* of October 30, 1915, expressed this unequivocally:

The world would be sane if, at the end of the war, a German had become as rare a thing as a snake in Ireland or a wild tiger in England.

The Allies were helped in this by a circumstance: although Germany was the great winner of the economic race up to 1914 according to all economic parameters, it had long neglected military armament in favor of the ocean-going fleet.

After all, in 1910 the British had spent a quarter of all government expenditure on naval armaments - three times as much as the thrifty German Empire spent on its Kriegsmarine. Expenditure on the Royal Navy had shattered Britain's public finances. Only in 1912, when it became clear in the face of rising international tensions that Germany could not win the arms race against Britain at sea, did its planners switch to land armaments. This was done far too late and often on the basis of outdated military technology.

Germany's armaments budget, even in 1913, was far less than that of any of the later belligerents! France had even reintroduced the 3-year service period abandoned in 1905.

Nevertheless, the hoped-for 6-week lightning victory of the coalition, which held Germany in a two-front war, did not materialize.

Instead, it came to an indecisive war of position with material battles. The Entente had completely underestimated Germany's will to assert itself. Panic spread increasingly in circles of the international Allied financiers.

What was achieved was that the "globalized world of 1913" with its free trade, cultural exchange and peaceful changes was senselessly shattered and wasted.

All German offers for a peace settlement were immediately rejected by the responsible Entente politicians. They could not help it, because in order to be able to drive the bloom of their youth onto the battlefields for the economic interests of a few, France's and England's politicians had had to borrow every last penny from American banks and investors. They were threatened with bankruptcy in the event of a German victory or a peace

settlement. The USA had therefore entered the world war in 1917 on the side of Germany's opponents in order to save its investments.

The Americans almost arrived too late, for between winter 1917 and July 1918 the Entente powers had increasingly lost the war of attrition. Nevertheless, despite its military superiority, the Imperial Army was no more able to defeat the Allied armies on the Western Front in the same way that it had previously achieved victory over Serbia, Romania and Russia.

But it was so close that in 1918, according to the leading French general Philippe Petain, the distance separating Germany from final victory could have been measured in steps. Treachery also played a role, as in the German Reims-Marne offensive of July 1918

Finally, two successful counteroffensives on July 18 and August 8, 1918, brought a strategic turnaround in favor of the Allies; from then on, it was all backward for the German Army.

This development was facilitated by the fact that, from the summer of 1918 onward, the hitherto victorious German Reich not only suffered from increasing deficits in the supply of materials and personnel, but also seemed paralyzed by party strife and defeatism, right up to the highest circles of the nobility and bourgeois elites.

Especially the revolutionary spirit spreading rapidly in the homeland due to hardship, hunger, Bolshevik propaganda and money from the Entente was a sign of the approaching crisis. The staging area filled up with German deserters without the authorities taking proper action.

In 1918/19, the empire could still have played one last trump card: Modern war technology had already decided victory and defeat many times in history.

Despite administrative obstacles and a shortage of raw materials, German inventors and industrialists succeeded in bringing out new types of weapons technology at the end of World War I that the Allied opponents had little to counter.

The new weapons, however, were used only to some extent or not at all, but even so, the Allies faced a new crisis in October 1918.

To the astonishment of the Allies, who were completely exhausted despite their major gains in terrain since August, a newly formed German

government then requested an armistice from U.S. President Wilson on October 4, 1918.

Was Berlin deceived by the fraudulent U.S. promise of a "peace settlement without victors and vanquished," or was there more to it than that?

On November 11, 1918, it was all over: New politicians and the forces behind them had not only driven out the emperor and changed the form of government, but had left Germany at the mercy of the Allies.

Bismarck's "Second Reich" existed only in memory. Leftist revolutionaries and soldiers' councils dominated the streets of Berlin.

Today, many claim that all this was bound to happen, which was a blessing for the world.

CHAPTER

The unexpected

"We will never crush the Germans!"

"We shall never trash the Boche!" exclaimed Lord Alfred Milner in horror to leading British figures on July 31, 1918.

For years, the lord and a small but extremely influential group had done more than almost anyone else to ensure that a war of extermination by the coalition they had put together against Germany, which Milner hated, was unleashed. Now they seemed to stand before the shambles of all previous efforts.

In fact, World War I was not a political war, but a commercial and industrial one, as then U.S. President Wilson admitted in the postwar period.

When the lights went out in Europe in the summer of 1914, Milner's group, like many others, had hoped that only a short war would result. Nor did the masterminds suspect that they were unleashing an inferno that Charles de Gaulle later equated with the Thirty Years' War.

By the summer of 1918, the war had not gone satisfactorily for the Allies, despite their seemingly inexhaustible sources of supplies and funding.

War fatigue spread on both sides of the Rhine. The question was which power group could hold out the longest and thus decide the war. Allied bankers prevented an early peace agreement with a reconciliation of interests, which was possible at any time. For them, a peace settlement would have been tantamount to bankruptcy. They preferred to take risks.

The fact was, as the great German shipowner Albert Ballin was still saying in September 1916, that the German people owed most of their debts to themselves, while England would have to pay off an enormous debt to America. This was also true for Italy and France.

In the case of a peace settlement, everyone would have had to pay for their war debts. So they let it go on - like vabanques.

Why the Germans willingly accepted all the armistice demands of the Allies

An inscription on a stone in the clearing of Compiegne states:

Here, on November 11, 1918, the criminal pride of the German Empire broke, defeated by the free peoples it presumed to subjugate.

On November 9, 1918, the German armistice delegation under Matthias Erzberger had arrived on the train at the clearing of Rethondes near Compiegne, France, at about 7 o'clock in the morning.

Germany, still far in enemy territory, asked for an armistice on the basis of Allied promises, not least in the face of a burgeoning revolution at home.

Originally, General Erich von Gündell was to become the chairman of the German Armistice Commission. He was suitable for this position because of his perfect command of the French language, his appearance and his practice in dealing with French officers. Erzberger, however, usurped the chairmanship of the Armistice Commission. With the approval of Prince Max of Baden, he crossed out General von Gündell's name on the list and put his own in its place. Erzberger recommended that he appear as guilty as possible at Compiegne, submissively sign everything, beg for forgiveness, and appeal to the morale of his opponents.

The Allied war council in Paris had put such strict armistice conditions on paper that he himself was horrified. But he got everything approved effortlessly by the Erzberger delegation.

The armistice included 34 articles.

- The Germans pledged to take over Belgium, France and the province of Alsace-Lorraine, which had been part of the Reich since 1871, within 14 days.

clear

- The German Reich was to become defenseless. Among other things, 5000 cannons, 1700 airplanes and 150000 railroad cars were to be surrendered.

- German ships were still allowed to be captured.
- The immediate delivery of all submarines and almost all capital ships had to take place.
- Allied prisoners of war were to be returned without reciprocity.
- As later in Iraq under Saddam Hussein-after the lost Kuwait War in 1990-allied control commissions had to be allowed into the country.
- The hunger blockade remained in place.

Much was anticipated at Compiegne that is generally settled in a peace treaty.

The Allied commanders-in-chief Ferdinand Foch and Douglas Haig were surprised that the German delegation accepted these unacceptable conditions without resistance. Documents then also showed that if the German delegation had objected, the wartime opponents would have been quite willing to accommodate Germany on important issues such as the retention of the fleet. No such opposition came. So was Germany's situation in the fall of 1918 really so bad that it had to surrender to the enemy, for better or worse, or were Germany's elites gambling away an otherwise likely peace settlement with the Allies for a variety of motives?

Today, Anglo-American centered historiography claims that Germany was still lucky in November 1918 that the Allies ended the war.

In addition to overwhelming superiority in men and material, the tactical competence and superior technology of the Allies would have ensured that the situation for the absolutely shattered German army became increasingly hopeless.

In order to assess this picture objectively, we will examine the situation of Germany in the summer of 1918, before the armistice request to the Allies went off.

As it looks, the world has been lied to since 1918!

CHAPTER 2

Was Germany finished from the summer of 1918?

Fig. 3 "Enterprise Michael". The operation began at the end of March 1918. Although German troops had advanced to about 64 kilometers into enemy territory, Ludendorff ended the operation on April 5, claiming that no decisive victory had been won.

On September 12, 1916, the Central Powers - Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey - had made a generous peace offer to the Allies.

There was talk of the catastrophe of war, which would deprive mankind of its most precious achievements:

It threatens to lay in ruins the spiritual and material progress of which Europe was the pride at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Central Powers were not out to crush or destroy their opponents. Inspired by the desire to prevent further bloodshed, the four allied powers proposed to enter into peace negotiations as soon as possible and put an end to the fighting.

In a note of January 10, 1917, the governments of the Allies (Entente) reacted by rejecting the peace offer. They even solemnly objected to the Central Powers, who were allegedly solely responsible for the war, being allowed to participate in peace negotiations on an equal footing at all.

In short, the total surrender of the enemy was demanded. The very word "peace" was sacrilegious.

In 1917, too, there had been a real chance of at least an armistice when Pope Benedict XV called on all warring parties on August 1, 1917, to negotiate, to renounce reparations and to return the occupied territories as well as colonies conquered by the Entente powers. An international court of arbitration was to rule on all disputed territorial issues, such as the dispute between Germany and France over Alsace-Lorraine. Kaiser Wilhelm II expressly welcomed the Pope's appeal for peace, pleaded for arms limitation and for the introduction of arbitration in international disputes. The Allies immediately rejected the Vatican's initiative. U.S. President Wilson was particularly harsh in this regard.

In March 1918, the German army launched a major offensive in France. This was hopefully called the "Kaiserschlacht" or "Operation Michael".

For the first time since the Battle of the Marne in 1914, Germany was

able to appear in the West with forces equal to those of its opponents. The German Supreme Army Command (OHL) wanted to try to force a decision in the West before American support, which was arriving at a comparatively stronger rate from month to month, would have offset the crippling side effects of 1917 in the Entente ranks.

The strategic situation had clearly improved in favor of the Germans. In the east, Russia and Romania had dropped out of the war, and Italy had suffered a crushing defeat at the end of 1917. However, the weather glow of an approaching storm had been coming ever closer from home since January 1918.

The success of the major German attack was surprisingly tremendous.

Thus, on March 21, 1918, the offensive began on the 50-kilometer-wide Arras-Cambrai-St. Quentin front. Already on March 30, the thrust had penetrated 60 kilometers deep, immense booty was gained, more than 90000 prisoners were taken.

The 5th English Army, thrown back on Amiens, ceased to exist as early as March 26, and the 3rd English Army had suffered extraordinarily badly. "It was the greatest defeat we had suffered in history," said English General Haig. General Petain, the French commander-in-chief, thought the Germans could be in Paris in 5 days at the latest. A severe panic was created there, which was considerably increased as a result of the shelling of the city by three German long-range guns at a range of 130 kilometers, which began on March 23. About 500000 inhabitants of the capital "rushed into the trains" at the end of March and the beginning of April. The Bank of France moved its holdings to safety inside the country. The evacuation of Paris and the transfer of the government to Tours were prepared.

the Western Front.

Serious disputes arose between French military leaders and politicians over the army's inability to put an end to this sinister threat. Marshal Foch declared after the war that the crisis at that time was the most dangerous in the world war; final victory was within reach for the Germans.

The victorious Germans were close to Amiens. The capture of this city would have driven a strong wedge between the English and French armies, which were already separated by a gap of 15 kilometers. If this separation succeeded completely, the French left wing would have to fear being rolled up entirely, while the badly shaken English troops would have been thrown back on the Channel ports. The French thereby ran the risk, as General Petain later expressed, of being forced to surrender in the open field. He wrote:

The distance separating the Germans from the final victory could be measured in steps. It was the small distance from the German front to Amiens.

The German troops got as far as the village of Albert in the Somme department, and then they went no further.

Air reconnaissance had reported that there were no enemies between Albert and Amiens. A distance of 30 kilometers was still to be covered. No one knew what was preventing the advance.

In fact, German troops in the English staging area had been busy looting and drinking the wine in the cellars. In addition, after several days of advance and poor rations, many German soldiers were stricken with the so-called "Spanish flu" and had to recover first.

Although the 18th German Army had achieved the breakthrough, one remained lying on March 27/28, 1918.

The towers of Amiens Cathedral were already visible; the British were already burning their ammunition supplies in the decisive city. The absence of two or three German cavalry divisions, which would have had only to advance into the rear of the defeated enemy, where Allied artillery was rushing in trucks without infantry protection, proved to be a decisive factor.

German truck columns, which could have transported the stormtrooper foot soldiers through the wide-open front gap, were on standby. However, they remained in the rear of depots without fuel during the crucial days, and the heavy German artillery also suddenly lacked ammunition. Just coincidences?

"March 27, 1918," wrote 1st General Staff Officer Karl von Prager to Crown Prince Rupprecht, "was the turning point of the great offensive." Without much enemy contact, the already defeated British plugged the huge hole in the front.

When the Germans decided to advance again a few days later, they were stopped by French troops who had been thrown directly from the railroad to the front with heavy casualties and no artillery of their own.

After these futile attempts to revive the attacks on March 30 and April 4, 1918, the German Supreme Army Command suspended "Unternehmen Michael."

The second major German attack against the British, called "Georgette," started on April 9, 1918. After only 9 days of preparation, the Germans succeeded in putting the British in such dire straits with a lightning attack in the direction of the all-important Allied supply node of Hazebrouck that General Haig had to order "hold to the last man" on April 11.

Plan Z", the evacuation of France, was planned with the utmost urgency, with the British expecting to have to leave all material behind in order to be able to rescue at least the soldiers and civilians to England.

However, the German forces were too weak for sustained success. When Operation Georgette developed more and more into a battle of materiel, Ludendorff called off the offensive.

But as late as April 27, 1918, British generals were discussing the possibility that it might soon be necessary to fall back on the Channel ports to evacuate the British Expeditionary Corps to Britain.

General Ludendorff, informed of this serious thought, sent a telegram to the German High Seas Fleet demanding that plans be made to counter an attempt by the British to evacuate their troops from France across the Channel.

Then, on May 27 and June 19, 1918, the Germans attacked the French with surprise and force. For the second time in the world war, the Marne was reached at Chateau-Thierry and Dormans. Only 77 kilometers separated the German soldiers from the French capital! 123000 prisoners, more than 600 guns and countless equipment fell into German hands; the conquered area was one of the most fertile in France.

From Chateau-Thierry on, as French reports state, the German troops had no enemy at all in front of them for a while. Ludendorff, however, did not take advantage of the opportunity.

The dire situation triggered a severe depression among the Entente. By mid-June, a new crisis had arisen among the Allies as more and more evidence of flagging will to fight among French and British soldiers came to light. The fact that German soldiers had also been developing increasingly severe morale problems since the spring was known in part to the Allied generals. During the "Georgette" operation, the Germans had already refused to leave the trenches.

On May 31, General Henry Wilson issued orders to prepare everything for the evacuation of the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) from the Continent. On June 1, the British Embassy in Paris prepared to move to England.

Completely surprisingly, the speech of the German Foreign Office Secretary Richard von Kühlmann to the Reichstag on June 24 saved Allied

mood Von Kühlmann announced that the war could no longer be won by military means alone. Allied Supreme Commander Foch then decided on an offensive within 2 months. Von Kühlmann had to resign, but the damage had already been done.

A final German attempt to launch a major offensive at Reims on July 15, 1918, failed after moderate initial successes-despite careful preparation and secrecy. Through high-level treachery,

decoding successes and statements by prisoners, the French had been well prepared. From now on, the initiative passed to the Entente.

While the Germans were still considering whether to plan renewed attacks or prefer to go on the defensive, the French attacked from the Villers-Cotterets forest on July 17, 1918, with Renault tanks and achieved considerable success. Foch mobilized 26 divisions for this purpose, supported by 400 tanks and 1100 aircraft.

Fig. 8 Georg Bruchmüller, called "Durchbruchmüller". In "Unternehmen Michael" he pulled together 6500 guns and 3500 trench mortars and had 1.6 million shells fired in only 5 hours. Although the Germans received timely advance information about the planned French attack, it was not passed on to the front lines. German soldiers were thus completely destroyed in the grain fields while helping French farmers harvest their crops and their own supplies.

The French were able to carry out their attack predominantly only with colonial troops, since the own personnel losses had been so high before. Here, too, the "human supply" was nearing its end!

From then on, the German leadership became increasingly nervous, and they withdrew across the Marne on July 20, 1918, without much loss.

The Allies also expressed disappointment that there had been no major progress since the Villers-Cotterets offensive.

The German Supreme Army Command then also planned new attacks, and the heavy German artillery of the brilliant artillery leader Georg Bruchmüller was already rolling toward the new attack target in Flanders.

As a way out of the crisis, however, the British had decided to launch a major offensive. Due to massive losses of their own personnel in the spring battles of 1918, they placed all expectations on the Canadians and Australians. His Majesty's strategists considered a deployment of the French and Americans too risky. They hoped that the mass attack by tanks would be decisive.

But despite the French success of July 17, deep pessimism prevailed in the British War Cabinet on July 25: Germany still had sufficient substantial reserves despite its failure before Rheims. Another successful German attack against the British would lead to the final abandonment of the Channel ports in France and Belgium.

Despite renewed foreknowledge from the German high command, the British then launched a major attack against the barely fortified German lines on August 8, 1918, and achieved great success. The warning had not been passed on to the front.

Between Albert and Montdidier, 32 divisions attacked with 430 tanks, 3000 guns and 1900 aircraft. Within a few hours they succeeded in breaking through the German lines to a width of 20 kilometers. However, a breakthrough into the depths did not succeed!

In the process, the English offensive could well have been prevented: Thus, an excellent division of Württemberger interrupted the preparations of the 3rd English Corps for the coming offensive, reinforced its positions, and was ready for the attack on August 8. Consequently, the 3rd English Corps could not keep pace with other corps of the 4th Army on August 8. Thus, the left flank was forcibly left open to German flank fire, causing high casualties among Entente troops during the major attack.

However, on August 8, 1918, parts of the German troops were already showing a lack of fighting spirit at the Battle of Amiens.

For example, General Ludendorff reported that at the time an elite bicycle brigade advancing to the front was called "strike breakers" by retreating comrades. Entire units surrendered without firing a single shot when the enemy was still 800 meters away.

Even the British then agreed that on August 8 the German army was no longer the fearsome fighting machine it had been only weeks earlier. The German losses on August 8: 16 divisions wiped out, of which 53000 (!) men were taken prisoner.

General Oskar von Hutier, the successful "breakthrough general," also reported on August 10, 1918, that advancing reserves had been insulted as "strike breakers" in other places as well.

Similar reports were received by the head of the German Alpine Corps, whose troops were "greeted" as "dumb Bavarians" - and again - as "strikebreakers."

Even the two Austrian divisions that had been ordered to France for reinforcements were insulted as "prolongers of the war" by German reserve units as they marched in.

Was there an organized action behind it? We do not know.

Von Hutier also reported strange orders and frequently changing orders transmitted to him by the OHL. He blamed the defeat before Amiens on the OHL! Was there already something wrong here with parts of the OHL?

However, by August 10, 1918 - after only 2 days - it was clear that the British offensive had once again lost its steam. The Germans had recovered from their initial shock and, despite heavy and most severe losses, often fought to the last man. The "strikers" had obviously already defected to the British!

The German generals then also agreed that the morale of their front-line troops had recovered.

The Allied tanks suffered horrendous losses against the German anti-tank guns at Amiens. Thus, on August 9, 145 tanks were still operational, and on August 11, just 38. In the end, 6 (!) remained! Allied tank crews had to be promised "leave" to even get back into their "iron coffins".

The Entente had broken the Germans' offensive spirit but had not made any major operational gains. In fact, the tactical success of August 8, 1918, which would later go down in history as the "Black Day" of the German Army, had only recaptured the top of the German terrain gains during the "Michael" offensive of spring 1918.

The psychological damage to the German leadership was nevertheless considerable and quickly ate away like a cancer.

Then, on August 14, 1918, a meeting was held at the Grand Headquarters in Spa, Belgium, presided over by the Kaiser himself. Admiral Paul von Hintze, the capable new German Foreign Minister, informed the meeting that he had been instructed by General Hindenburg that further attacks were not possible and that Germany would now try to wear down the Entente with a defensive strategy.

The generals were convinced that the German army would remain on French soil. And so it was until the end of the war.

Even top Allied officers such as General William Robertson, despite all the successes around Amiens, no longer believed in the possibility of a major breakthrough through the Western Front that would have led to the destruction of the German Army.

The situation of the German Empire after 4 years of mass slaughter

against a world of enemies in the summer of 1918 was certainly not brilliant, but also not as hopeless as it is often portrayed today. The "Hundred Days Offensive" can be taken as an example of modern historiography. After the "Black Day of Amiens," it supposedly led to the complete destruction of the German army by November 1918.

The truth about the "victorious hundred-day offensive" of the Entente

Today, in modern parlance, the "Hundred Days Offensive" is referred to as the final phase of World War I on the Western Front.

After the "Black Day of the German Army" on August 8, 1918, the Allies undertook a series of attacks against German soldiers until November 11, 1918. This series of attacks was not in itself a cohesive operation, but a rapid succession of individual Allied terrain gains that ended on November 11, 1918, with the Compiegne Armistice. Importantly, the Germans thereby cleared terrain they had already occupied since 1914.

After the abandonment of the "Siegfried", "Hermann", "Hunding" and "Brunhilde" positions, the last battles of November 11, 1918 took place in the open terrain in front of the Antwerp-Meuse position, which had been hastily expanded for defense as the last bastion in front of the Rhine.

However, the fighting was so fierce that the victors suffered far more casualties than their opponents during their hundred-day offensive to the very end. These losses in dead and wounded were reminiscent of the bad times in the early stages of the war in 1914.

The English thus lost over 400,000 soldiers in the period from August 8 (Amiens) to November 11 (Armistice); this does not include the French and U.S. dead. This was far more than the English lost during the "existential crisis" of their army in March and April 1918.

While historians have for decades viewed the "Hundred Days Offensive" as a single Allied success story, military historians have recently taken a more nuanced view on this issue.

It is about the concept of "defensive battles" that the German army applied in the West from August 1918. The idea was to gain time to regain a stronger position from which to launch limited offensive operations after holding out until the winter of 1918/19.

The idea behind this was to so weaken the Allies through a series of successive time-consuming, fearsome defensive battles that their fighting ability would be crippled.

In the new German defensive tactics during the "Abwehrschlacht" from August 1918 on, counterattacks from the flank played an important role. The idea was to let overpowered opponents pass, then close the front lines with flank attacks in order to enclose the enemy who had penetrated to the second or third line. Without connection to their own artillery and cut off from ammunition supply, the isolated units were attacked by the defenders.

In this way, the Germans managed to eliminate entire infantry brigades of the French, British and Americans.

For this purpose, a defense in depth was to take place, which was only partially based on fixed lines as in previous years. In the process, Germany additionally benefited from the "short inner line," while the Allied supply routes became longer and longer.

In fact, modern military strategists view this German technique of "defensive battles" from the summer of 1918 not as a spawn of defeat, but as a high operational art of defense. It is still studied and taught in the 21st century at the U. S. Army General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

At the same time, according to these modern military experts, the technology of "defensive battles" became more and more sophisticated with time.

While the Entente soldiers, after their successes with combined large-scale attacks by infantry and tanks, had to revert to traditional attack techniques from the end of August and thus, with extreme losses, ran incessantly against the German lines with infantry attacks, the Germans defended themselves in a sophisticated manner with machine guns and artillery; direct troop deployment was largely dispensed with in order to keep their own losses as small as possible. This could also be described as a "technological defense in depth". Bridges and transport facilities were thoroughly destroyed.

The flanked planned retreat movements took place mostly at night. By mid-afternoon, the Allies had opened up against the new German positions,

and fighting ensued until the following night, when the whole thing started all over again.

From time to time, the Germans also launched fierce heavy counterattacks at the appropriate moment. The Canadians mentioned here October 1, 11, and 12, November 6, and even November 10, just one day before the end of the war.

Thus, they tried to spare their own forces and inflict as high losses as possible on the enemy during the retreat battles.

There are numerous examples of how hard the fighting was despite the continuing German retreat. For example, at roll call of the 43rd Canadian Battalion on October 30, only 27 of B Company's 125 men were able to respond "Here!" The rest had been killed in a very short time by artillery fire in terrain that had been accurately surveyed beforehand by the Germans.

It is not the fault of the concept that everything turned out differently, as we will see later.

Brigadier General Henry Hugh Tudor wrote in his diary on November 11, 1918, that the German army had fought over every mile of his division's advance and that his infantry had suffered 30 percent casualties since they began their attack in October. The newly drafted replacement troops of the British proved inexperienced and took a disproportionate toll of blood.

For the German high command, the overriding goal was to gain time. According to the assessment of General Hermann von Kuhl, holding out into the winter of 1918/19 would indeed have provided a sufficiently long operational pause for further fighting or promising negotiations.

At the modern U. S. Army General Staff School, then, it is also considered an object lesson in how the Allies were so carried away by the German concept of "defensive battles" that their "hundred-day offensive" actually failed to achieve a resplendent victory anywhere by the end of the war.

Instead, the victors were so exhausted that, like the British after the armistice, it took them 6 days to even resume their advance, and even then this was only possible with less than a third of their existing strength.

The French, who had initially charged with enthusiasm after the successes of the summer, lost their appetite for continuing to fight during frequent action in open terrain against stubborn German resistance, which often came

more from machine guns than artillery but was supported in a coordinated fashion by German aviators. Faced with their constant losses and the slow progress of the attacks, some French units refused to obey orders to advance, while others were no longer willing to take risks and would only move in if the Germans had already cleared an area.

The Canadians, also increasingly enervated because of their high blood toll, tried the same tactics. They also suffered from a shortage of artillery ammunition in the last weeks of the war and had had to withdraw their cavalry corps intended for the chase from the front due to proven uselessness.

British General Henry Rawlinson confided to his diary on 27 October that the U. S. Corps of his 4th Army had also had to be withdrawn and would not be fit for use for a month. The Australians would be unfit for war use by the end of November 1918, and his XIII and IX Corps had been bled dry. Corps had been bled dry. As a result, Rawlinson's 4th Army could no longer keep up the pressure on the enemy because it simply had no serviceable soldiers left.

In August 1918, it had still spearheaded the Allied attack at the Battle of Amiens.

"Plan 1919" - How the Allies Ended the Never-Ending War still intended to win

Entente planners expected the war to drag on indefinitely in mid-1918 and deployed their planning to reflect this scenario.

It was clear to all those responsible that after the terrible losses of the previous 4 years, the fight could hardly continue in the same way for much longer.

With the exception of the USA, the warring countries were threatened with total exhaustion and revolution from within. The example of the tsarist empire was a spectre not only for imperial Germany. The British also had a royal family!

Thus, in 1918, a new form of combat had taken hold, which in many respects made the previous fighting methods of positional warfare in the West appear obsolete. With the exception of the USA, all major warring parties had largely exhausted their personnel reserves and had stretched the physical strength and fighting morale of their front-line troops to breaking point.

The mutinies in France, Italy and Russia in 1917 represented signs of this impending exhaustion point. With this danger in the background and the certainty that the gaps could no longer be replaced by the personnel reserves, no commander-in-chief now wanted to risk continuing to use the brutal mass assault formations of the years 1914-1917.

Fig. 12 John Frederick Charles Fuller (1878-1966) his "Plan 1919," British major developed one of the first theories modern, mobile armored warfare, in which air power plays a decisive role

It was clear to both belligerents that technology and superior tactics would have to replace the fallen regiments buried beneath the fields of France and Belgium.

Since the Entente had rejected all German offers of a peace settlement, the only thing left to do was to wait and see which side in the war would lose its nerve first and throw in the towel in the face of impending system change and revolution. Alternatively, a decisive breakthrough in the technical and/or strategic field had to be achieved as quickly as possible.

Here, the Allies hoped to win the illusory fortune of war with a completely new strategy, the "Plan 1919".

The so-called 1919 Plan originated in a paper by a subordinate British staff officer named John Frederick Charles Fuller.

Fuller argued that under the given battlefield conditions of 1918, a decisive breakthrough in the war of position was no longer possible.

For years, weakening the enemy by bleeding and losing materiel as part of "material warfare" had proven too costly and completely unsafe. Instead, Fuller proposed that the Allies employ a "decapitation strategy" and try their luck in breaking through to enemy command, control, and supply centers. He laid out a three-phase attack for this purpose, with each phase heavily supported from the air.

- In the first phase, medium tanks were to penetrate the German main battle line at two closely separated points to disorganize the command and control system. This was to be done without preparatory artillery attacks, which would only alert the defenders.
- After that, a combined force of infantry and heavy tanks would break through the disorganized German lines in the second phase and clear out all pockets of resistance as they advanced.
- In the third phase, medium tanks and cavalry would have pushed

through the gaps struck earlier to overwhelm the retreating defenders, destroy supply centers, cut telephone and telegraph lines, disrupt railroads, and knock out artillery and command posts.

It was calculated to advance about 20 miles a day in 4 to 5 days. This speed, Fuller promised, would give the attack a decisive success before the Germans got an opportunity to attack the long vulnerable flanks of the mobile Allied columns.

Fuller's plan found an open ear with the Allied commander-in-chief, Marshal Foch. For this "Plan 1919", Foch demanded a tank strength of 10000 vehicles in 1919, which was to be based on two basic types.

For the attack along an 80-kilometer front line, Fuller's original concept called for 2600 heavy "breakthrough tanks" and 2400 medium "exploitation tanks."

The problem was that all existing Allied tank types in 1918 were totally inadequate for this type of battle. Previous tanks broke down far too often for mechanical reasons and had too few reserves of fuel and ammunition for mobile operations. In addition, they possessed neither sufficient armor nor the capability necessary to overcome trenches.

Since none of the existing vehicles could meet these requirements of Fuller, a mixture of slow, heavy short-range tanks and fast, medium-range tanks was to fill the gaps.

Since the first British medium tank A, called the "Whippet," had proved totally unsuitable for the tasks associated with Plan 1919, the British developed the new Medium Mark B and Mark C tanks with great haste.

The role of the heavy tank was to be filled by a joint production of France, England and America. This new tank was called "Mark VIII Liberty" or "International".

The Mark VIII was an enlarged version of the heavy British rhomboid tank with better tracks, greater trench-clearing capability, and powerful propulsion by Ricardo or Liberty V-12 engines. The armor of the "Liberty" was supposed to withstand the German K-cartridge. The whole thing turned out to be a bad design after the end of the war, much too heavy for the tracks used.

It was clear to the creators of "Plan 1919" that better tanks could not be the

sole answer to the problems of the battlefield in the West.

Past tank attacks at Cambrai, Amiens, and Villers- Bretonneux had clearly demonstrated that while tanks could achieve short-lived breakthroughs and disorganization of the German defenders when deployed in a concentrated effort, each time victory seemed already within reach, the operation failed thoroughly.

The tanks quickly broke down technically, were lost in the field, or fell victim to the well-organized German anti-tank defenses. Between August 8 and October 20, 1918, 830 British tanks remained on the battlefield.

Artillery also could not follow forward in the shot-up battlefield, and the supply of personnel, materiel, and ammunition to the focal points would quickly become a disaster.

For Fuller, therefore, aircraft represented one of the answers to the weaknesses of tank warfare at the time.

Bombers were to seal off the battlefield, disorganize enemy communications and headquarters, and disrupt rail supplies.

Fighter planes were intended as flying field artillery replacements on the advance in the manner of today's fighter-bombers.

Communications and infantry protection aircraft were to transmit messages and drop supplies for temporarily isolated or trapped units.

Fuller's concept of the "1919 Plan" was considered the blueprint for the major generalized Allied spring offensive of the next year of the war.

Only the German request for an armistice in September 1918 would have saved Germany from certain catastrophe by executing the "Plan 1919," as historiography in the 21st century tries to convey.

The truth, however, is quite different. The war-weary countries of England and France could no longer afford to call up further fresh reserves of personnel needed to carry out the plan, and things also looked bleak in terms of new aircraft and tank models.

In fact, by 1919 the Allies would probably have had slightly more light tanks of the previous conventional types and some medium tanks than in 1918, although the main problem would always have been a still lack of spare parts and scarce crews. With the new tanks, they certainly could have launched mass attacks similar to those in August 1918. However, the

difference from the previous year would probably have been small.

The old tank models, with which the Entente would then have entered the 1919 battle, had already proved extremely vulnerable to German antitank defenses in the summer of 1918. Thus, on August 8, 1918, of 34 of the new Mark V tanks of the 4th Canadian Division, only four had reached their attack target. Ten of them alone fell victim to a single German gun at Le Quesnel.

At the end of the Amiens offensive, after 4 days of fighting, only six British tanks were even operational. Historian John Terraine noted ironically that the German Empire could not be overthrown by six tanks.

For Fuller's revolutionary concept, technology and tactics were not sophisticated enough until the late 1930s. Hitler's "Blitzkriege" (1939-1941) were then the further development and perfection of Fuller's ideas.

What were the chances of success for the Allied "Plan 1919" from the air?

According to the concept of Fuller's "Plan 1919," air forces should have played the decisive role alongside the tank weapon.

The battle of the "linked arms" announced itself! Allied bombers were to isolate the battlefield, disrupt enemy communications networks, attack headquarters and bomb transportation hubs.

Battle planes were to use special bombs (20-pound Cooper bombs) to hold down antitank artillery, locate friendly and enemy forces, and supply temporarily cut-off units from the air.

British had already attempted such operations in the Battle of Amiens August 1918. The casualties had been appalling: On August 8, 96 of 700 fighters in action had to be written off, and on August 9, another 45 planes were shot down; similar losses occurred on the following days.

"No. 8 Squadron RAF," specially assigned to hunt German antitank artillery, had lost nine of its eighteen aircraft to firing on August 8 and 9; all others had to be repaired.

The two armored aircraft types intended as replacements for the sensitive wire-covered fabric biplanes - the "Sopwith Salamander" fighter and the "Sopwith Buffalo" two-seat work plane - existed only as prototypes.

The two-seater was a rather sluggish and cumbersome specimen with questionable flight characteristics. The design looked like a failure.

The "Sopwith TF.2 Salamander", on the other hand, would have been excellently suited for its planned task, but only two copies reached France before the end of the war. It would have been a force to be reckoned with in 1919! The superior new German all-metal fighters, however, would hardly have allowed the Allied air component of the "Plan 1919" to develop.

This would have left the advancing Allied forces at the mercy of German tankers and fast twin-engine bombers, while new all-metal bombers and R-planes would have wreaked havoc on Entente transportation hubs, headquarters, and supply ports.

Already during the "Hunderttageschlacht" the German night bombers could achieve great successes.

More details about
the revolutionary German
Aviation technology at the end of the war will be presented in a later book.

The truth about the alleged Allied air superiority at the end of the First World War

From the start of the British counteroffensive "Big Push" on August 18, 1918, the Allies held air superiority over the battlefield until the end of the war. However, this was not so much due to the superior fighting skills of the pilots or the technical quality of the aircraft stock, but was caused by the incredible number of available aircraft and by German fuel shortages.

On August 18, the British had 1700 operational aircraft, while the French had 2800; this number was to rise to 3222 within the next 4 months. The U.S. counted over 740 aircraft in service by the end of the war. The ratio was 10:1 to the disadvantage of the Germans!

Consequently, in the last weeks of the war, massive formations of up to 200 bombers attacked individual targets, protected by fighter planes in squadron strength. Each individual Allied reconnaissance plane was accompanied by up to fifteen fighter planes.

In October, the French succeeded in destroying an entire German division by air attacks. Germany was able to counter this formidable armada with four fighter squadrons, called "Flying Circuses." In addition to frequent redeployments, these suffered from severe fuel shortages beginning in late September. In most cases, they were thrown from one section to another at short notice.

Fig. 17 "Fokker D.VII", the fighter plane of the later Hermann Göring. Göring loved the white color even as a first lieutenant, as this photo of his "Fokker D.VII 5125/18" proves

Nevertheless, it was not due to German aviators that the First World War could not be won. General Ernst von Hoeppner, head of the German Air Force, reported that from January to September 1918 the German pilots themselves lost 1099 planes, but were able to shoot down 3732 Allied planes.

Incredible aircraft losses were recorded not only by the Americans, but also by the British and French, especially in September and October 1918.

The RAF (Royal Air Force) lost so many aircraft that it was deprived of the ability to conduct the long-planned strategic-scale bombing war against German civilians.

On September 14, 1918, when the German Army was only going backwards, the JG 2 fighter squadron shot down nineteen American and French planes with only one own loss.

In the places where the "Flying Circuses" were used, German fighter squadrons and fighter groups succeeded to the last in breaking up the enemy formations and forcing them to drop bombs before they could reach their targets.

The loss rates of the Allied air forces regularly amounted to several times in favor of the Germans until the end of the war, and when the American land forces began a major offensive west of Metz on September 20, JG 2 alone shot down 89 American aircraft in 2 days, more than 10 percent of the total U.S. inventory ever!

The 96th Aero Squadron of the USA lost fourteen bombers in only 5 days and flew with new crews and material afterwards only on 2 days in November 1918. Here the "weather" was to blame.

In the view of Fighter Squadron 2, Germany's success in the struggle for air superiority ultimately depended only on fuel supplies.

The squadrons of JG 2 thus received only 450 liters of fuel a day, which was one-fifth of the necessary requirement. While the fighter squadrons received enough wine, tobacco and chocolate until the end, fuel was lacking

for reasons that were never fully explained. Toward the end, the squadrons had to rely on pumping gasoline from downed Entente aircraft.

The Allies could breathe a sigh of relief!

According to leading American aviation historians, it so happened that the German air forces continued to fight in 1918 without signs of waning combat morale, and their performance was as high to the end as at any other time in the war.

In the air undefeated was then also the title of a compilation published in 1923 by the former German Air Force Major Georg Paul Neumann with reports on the experiences of his comrades.

With all the shortages of personnel, equipment, fuel and spare parts, and despite the weakening caused by the "Spanish flu," which was killing someone from the crews and ground personnel every day, the Air Force did its duty until the armistice.

Towards the end of the war, the Luftwaffe also suffered from acts of sabotage, such as in the manufacturing plants at the bomb testing facility in Frankfurt (Oder) or in attempts to prevent aircraft from flying overhead to the rear by cutting the tension cables.

One secret of German success against Allied superiority in the air was the "Fokker D.VII", arguably the best fighter of the First World War. It made such an impression on the other side that the armistice terms specifically demanded that "first and foremost all D.VII apparatus" be delivered.

In addition to the "Fokker D.VII", the German air forces had a few "Siemens-Schuckert D.III/IV". They were probably the most powerful interceptors of the war, but suffered from temperamental engines.

"Siemens-Schuckert D.V" was a further development of the D.IV with a new type of wing that had an aluminum-dural framework instead of plywood and did not require any wing covering at all. Three of these high-performance fighters of "mixed construction" were completed before the end of the war and were to fly in homeland defense.

It remained largely unknown that Germany had far superior aircraft types besides these fighter types. One need only recall the "flying razor" Fokker D.VIII or the all-metal fighters of Junkers and Dornier.

Some of these were already in influx before the end of the war in 1918 or

would have come to the front in larger numbers in 1919.

It was then a "Fokker D.VIII" that achieved the last aerial victory of the war.

Did the emperor run out of soldiers in 1918?

Only about 10 percent of the German soldiers sent into the field in 1914 returned completely unscathed from the First World War. 13.2 million men were mobilized for the Kaiser between 1914 and 1918, of whom about 1.9 million fell.

Until mid-1917, the Imperial Army had succeeded remarkably well in maintaining its field strength, but then gaps appeared, similar to those in England and France.

In fact, in March and April 1918, Germany had suffered the heaviest losses since 1914, higher even than those at Verdun, the Somme, or the Third Battle of Ypres. In the month of April alone, 54000 soldiers fell, 445000 were wounded or sick.

The Great Meeting of October 17, 1918, attended by the top civilian and military leaders of the German Empire, then addressed the question of whether Germany still had sufficient human reserves to continue to resist if it was decided to resume the war in full if the German armistice request of October 3 failed.

From January to July 1918, the Germans had lost over 88300 men.

But more significantly, over a million men had reported sick or deserted behind the front. Others searched in groups behind the front for their unit without really wanting to find it.

Thus, by October 1918, only 2.5 million soldiers stood ready to fight in the West, and the future recruiting situation seemed desperate.

The "dilemma" had arisen earlier. General Ludendorff's urgent requests to send him at least a few thousand additional men from home during the spring offensives were not heeded even then.

In mid-May, Ludendorff had mentioned to his assistant, Colonel Hans von Haefen, that only if the homeland would send him 200,000 new soldiers would there be a chance for a military decision. But neither Reich Chancellor Hertling nor War Minister Scheuch could help him. They feared the parties in the Reichstag in Berlin, which would be opposed to stricter

military service regulations.

The French reached the peak of their manpower in July 1918 with 2234000 men; by October 1918 their strength had dropped to 1688000 soldiers. The terrible battles of 1918 accelerated the melting of the manpower. The class of 1902 was to be called up 2 years earlier, as in Germany. In addition, black colonial troops (43200 men) had been shipped to Europe in 1918. Only with them Clemenceau believed to be able to maintain the war in 1919 at all.

The British had also reached the end of the line in terms of personnel. The British could replace the material, but not the 315,000 men that the German offensives in March and April had cost them. The British public was lied to about this!

The Dominions, with the exception of Canada, also refused to increase their troop contingent. As early as March 30, 1918, British headquarters in France had determined that their own reserves of personnel were no longer sufficient: "... and then that's that!" After July 1918, the British did not even try to maintain their personnel "status quo".

What was the situation like in Germany in the fall of 1918?

In October, War Minister Heinrich Scheuch replied to probing questions from General Ludendorff and Reich Chancellor Max von Baden that two measures could be considered:

The first was that 190000 man replacements could be provided monthly without major tangible interference in the home economy. Had this been overlooked until now?

Should the army alternatively receive a uniquely strong supply, Scheuch promised as a second the raising of 600000 men. These were his conservative estimates; the individual calculations would even result in 637000 new soldiers. In this case, however, the intervention would already be felt. Scheuch did not believe that in this case there would be a considerable shortfall in the production of war material, but the home economy would be disrupted.

According to the Minister of War, after these 600,000 men, it would no longer be possible to secure 190000 men per month, but only about 100,000 men as replacements for the next half year. To the further replacement until autumn 1919 one could then add again up to 50000 men, if the vintage 1901 would be hired earlier.

General Ludendorff stated:

If we had had these favorable numbers now, we would not have had the crisis on the Western Front. And when I get the people, I look to the future with confidence. [...] I have always presented the shortage of people as the most important thing. Today I hear that the shortage is not as great as I had assumed [when the Quartermaster General demanded armistice negotiations from the Kaiser; author's note]. Today I hear that I can get 600,000 men in the foreseeable future. Why I could not get them sooner, I do not want to talk about. Since April and much longer I have been fighting for men. They have not been given to me. It is a fact that we are short of 70000 men a month. If this deficit ceases, and the enemy's fighting strength diminishes, there is no need to accept all conditions.

Was the "endogenous factor" mentioned later in this book also at work here?

That the figures cited were not fantasy was emphasized by Secretary of War Scheuch:

I would like to give the assurance that I will use all my strength to ensure that this figure is adhered to. But then we also do not want to miss a day after this direction.

The whole thing was possible because - unlike the Western powers - 1.2 million soldiers had been recalled from military service in September 1916 and a further 1.9 million in 1917 as trained manpower to ensure the armaments program. Many of this large reservoir of fit men could now be sent back to the front. In their place at home, women would increasingly be used.

In fact, as promised by Scheuch, the War Ministry began to draft the rest of the class of 1900 as an "emergency draft" at the end of October. A clandestine "levee en masse" (i.e., mass enlistment, in which the entire population is theoretically made available to the war machine) was also attempted, which contributed to unrest and the outbreak of the revolution.

How was the supply of weapons, ammunition, army equipment, horses and food?

An expert report commissioned by the German Reichstag on the reasons for the German defeat stated:

Lack of guns, rifles, machine guns, mortars and ammunition did not significantly affect the operations in 1918 until the end on the German side.

According to this, the increase in powder deliveries of 12000 tons called for in the "Hindenburg Program" was achieved in April 1918. It still increased in the following months and amounted to over 14000 tons in October 1918. 10000 ammunition trains could be provided monthly.

The production of field guns also met the requirements of the Supreme Army Command. 2900 new guns left the factories every month in the summer of 1918.

Despite the large losses of materiel that had occurred in the battles of 1918, the War Department was therefore able to provide the necessary artillery supplies. At the end of the war, the German cannon inventory still amounted to 19808 field guns and 7860 heavy guns.

At the end of the war, such a large reserve of field guns was still available that the surrender of 59897 guns demanded at the armistice could be made immediately.

The production of rifles and machine guns was so significant in the spring of 1918 that the OHL desired their reduction to 75000 rifles and 6000 machine guns per month. Here, too, there was a significant surplus in the fall of 1918.

The Army's supply of engineer equipment also met all requirements until the end. No shortage of any kind occurred.

The lack of horse feed, on the other hand, was a cause for concern. The roughage, which was supposed to replace the missing concentrated feed and oats, was never enough. Some troops did not get hay for their horses for months. The consequences for the animals were terrible.

The replacement of horses had also developed extremely unfavorably at the beginning of 1918. The stock on the western front had risen from 360000 animals in March 1915 to 957000 in April 1918. For the "attack army", however, only about 100,000 particularly efficient horses were available.

From the homeland and the occupied territories could not meet the requirements of the front in animals. As a substitute, oxen and dogs were then also used at the front in 1918. But this did not solve the horse problem!

It is therefore not a failure of production that there were increasing shortages at the front from the summer of 1918.

A major mistake made by German planners, however, was their chronic disregard for agriculture. As more and more men, horses, and fuel were diverted from agriculture and used for the war effort and armaments production, agricultural production abruptly shrank, food prices skyrocketed, and more and more people suffered from food shortages.

This effect, which was disastrous for German morale, was reinforced by the Allied naval blockade.

Did a lack of oil on the German side force the ceasefire?

Between the beginning of hostilities in 1914 and their end in 1918, a revolution occurred in military strategy.

Whether it was Fokker D.VIIIs over the skies of the Argonne, submarine cruisers off America, and Imperial Army trucks off Amiens, they all had one thing in common: they relied on oil.

Although on the German side the railroad remained the decisive means of transport for troop movements and supplies until the end, gasoline and diesel oil became increasingly vital for the new technical means of combat.

This was precisely what the Empire increasingly lacked from the summer of 1918 onward. After (!) the Western Offensive, Germany lacked no less than one-fifth of its requirements, allegedly because of the extraordinary increase in truck traffic and the proliferation of air formations.

But not only in Germany, but also in large parts of France, the mineral oil supply was critical. At the end of 1917, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau was even warned by his advisors that the country's oil supply could collapse in the spring of 1918.

General Foch asked Prime Minister Clemenceau to send an urgent appeal to U.S. President Wilson. It stated:

A failure in the oil supply will immediately disintegrate our armies and force upon us a peace unfavorable to the Allies. The security of the Allies is in question. If the Allies do not want to lose the war, they must not deprive France of oil, as indispensable as blood on the battlefields of tomorrow, in the event of a major German offensive.

President Wilson was happy to comply with this request and sent newly built oil tankers across the Atlantic to France and England.

Rockefeller's Standard Oil of New Jersey, as well as Royal Dutch Shell and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, played a decisive role in overcoming

the Allied oil crisis.

The German Reich, hit by the Allied boycott and the naval blockade, could not hope for anything like this. Until the end of 1917, Germany's crude oil supply depended not only on its own deposits in Alsace (Pechelbronn) and north of Hanover (Wietzen), but above all on the production areas in Galicia. The Galician oil fields alone supplied almost three-fifths of the total oil consumption for Germany and its allies during the war.

Romania's entry into the war on the side of the Entente on August 27, 1916, was to prove an unexpected stroke of luck for German warfare. The oil-rich country suffered a complete defeat and was occupied by the troops of the Central Powers until the spring of 1917.

After a Romanian defeat had become apparent, the officers of the Western powers attached to the Romanian army, including above all the British military attaché Colonel Thompson, demanded the complete destruction of all installations and oil supplies of the Romanians.

The Romanian government resisted this appalling proposal almost to the last moment before, finally "persuaded", they agreed.

Then, as of November 20, 1916, the Allies were given unlimited authority in the petroleum area. Thompson took advantage of this to call in English engineers, whom he appointed "temporary officers" of the British Army. Attempts were made to shut down the entire Romanian oil fields for as long as possible. Drilling rigs were burned down, material was rendered useless, and the wells were "boarded up."

The preventive destruction and sealing of the Romanian oil fields was unprecedented in modern history. For the first time, production facilities of an ally were systematically rendered useless in order to weaken the economy of the enemy. The result after the war was a desolate series of lawsuits for compensation for the destroyed facilities, which dragged on until 1928.

After the takeover of the Romanian oil territories, the German military administration in Romania made every effort to repair the terrible damage to the facilities of the oil companies Steaua Română, Concordia and Royal Dutch Shell.

An unparalleled effort enabled oil production to be resumed as early as April 1917. By the end of the year, about half of the pre-war production had been achieved - an astonishing achievement in view of the severity of the destruction, but one that also showed that permanent paralysis of large oil fields is hardly possible.

Nevertheless, Major Thompson's action proved particularly consequential for German warfare: the destruction of supplies and the loss of production deprived Germany and its allies of 4 million tons of oil.

Considering that Germany and its allies had a total of only 6.5 million tons of oil available during the entire war, it becomes clear how successful Major Thompson was.

At least the Germans managed, in a violent effort, to remove 1.15 million tons of oil from Romania by the end of the war.

Although Romania had concluded a provisional peace treaty with Germany in Bucharest since May 7, 1918, Romanian oil arrived only haltingly at the front troops. This seems all the more astonishing since the transport routes from both Galicia and Romania remained completely undisturbed by bombing and the oil tankers on the Danube route did not suffer from mines either. Was high-level sabotage already taking place here?

With the construction of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, Germany had gained access to the newly discovered huge oil deposits between Mosul and Baghdad from 1912. The plan was to ship the Mesopotamian oil to Germany by rail in order to circumvent a possible British naval blockade.

On June 2, 1914, the railroad to Baghdad was ready, 26 days later the

attack in Sarajevo took place; one month later, World War I broke out - just coincidences? It can certainly be argued that England, which since 1900 had tried to prevent or at least delay the realization of the Baghdad Railway project with political pressure and diplomatic tricks, continued its policy by other means from August 1, 1914.

However, plans to establish a state oil company to develop and exploit these oil wells by the empire were delayed, especially by the SPD opposition, until the outbreak of war. Had English money to the German opposition helped here? The suspicion has never been clarified.

Incredibly, bankrupt England mortgaged the Ottoman Empire's Mesopotamian oil wells as part of secret loan agreements even before the outbreak of war to potent financiers, although they were not yet in his possession!

During the war, German oil production teams were already successfully drilling for oil in Mesopotamia. The "Brennstoffkommando Arabia" developed the Qayyarah oilfield south of Mosul, and when Anglo-American oil companies began to exploit the area in the 1930s, they found the two old German wartime probes No. 1 and 2 there, as well as four more cranes for deep drilling. The oil produced on site served German units in Iraq and Palestine. The Germans had even built a small refinery. A pipeline to the Mediterranean was planned! The fact is that the major German offensive before Amiens at the end of March 1918 got bogged down at the decisive moment, also due to a lack of fuel for the numerous trucks that had to ensure the supply and advance.

Bruchmüller's artillery also failed at the same time due to a lack of mechanical means of transport. Only with great difficulty were the essentials brought in by horse-drawn train or with the help of prisoners of war; however, this was done much too slowly.

While the German troops, completely exhausted from several days of fighting and sick with flu, struggled on foot through the 15-kilometer-wide gap in the front near Amiens, the British were able to close the gap in the front on the Western Front, which was probably unique during the war, faster than the Germans were able to march on foot.

The German truck convoys standing by would have meant the difference - if there had been gasoline in their tanks.

In the course of the war, every effort was made to secure the supply of mineral oil for the German war machinery. In the process, access was already being made to promising technologies.

Thus, sulfurous lignite with a high bitumen content was also processed

into lignite tar. Lubricating oils, heating oils and diesel fuel could be obtained using complex tar processing methods.

Thus, in 1918, almost 500,000 tons of tar oil were extracted via lignite carbonization. It was used primarily for diesel propulsion by the submarine fleet, which was able to cover its requirements.

Since 1917, the exploitation of oil shale deposits in Württemberg had also been under discussion. There, over an area of 110 square kilometers, there was an oil shale that was on average 8 meters thick. In 1944/45, the project was to be tackled again in the Third Reich.

As an alternative to petroleum, the Heidelberg professor Friedrich Bergius had already developed his coal liquefaction process in 1913. In the period 1914-1918, his hydrogenation process was no longer used. This was an unused opportunity to deal with the problem of dependence on external sources. From 1939 to 1945, coal liquefaction was later to play a key role in German warfare.

At the end of the First World War, the Germans, Turks and Allies then attempted to take advantage of the rich Russian oil deposits of Baku on the Caspian Sea in a race-like manner.

An earlier push by the British and French across the Dardanelles went horribly wrong at Gallipoli. It was intended to supply the Anglo-French war effort with Russian oil from Baku. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty at the time, had laid out the following strategy: If the British fleet penetrated the straits between the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, it would force the Sultan to surrender, Athens to side with England, and Tsar Nicholas to help in arms.

All landing attempts from April 25, 1915 onward failed and resulted in well over 150,000 Allied casualties, so that the Allies largely retreated to their ships during the night of December 19-20. The casualty figures can be compared with those at the Somme and at Ypres. The German General Liman von Sanders, commander of the 5th Turkish Army and head of the German military mission, said in retrospect:

If the Allied operation had succeeded and the Gallipoli Peninsula had been lost, it would have meant the Allied breakthrough into the Black Sea and a secure link between the Western powers and Russia. Thus, Turkey would have jumped off the side of Germany.

In September 1918, in agreement with the Russian government, 19,000 men of German special troops under the name of "Lehrkommando Kaukasus" under General Friedrich Kreß von Kressenstein were ready in Tbilisi and Sevastopol.

In addition to cavalry, armored cars, two aviation detachments and a dismantled submarine, General Kreß von Kressenstein, known for his bold advances against the Suez Canal, also had an assault battalion.

Until mid-October 1918, his "Lehrkommando Kaukasus" was to occupy oil-rich Baku and protect it against marauding Turks and greedy English oil companies.

Tank cars with Baku oil never left for Germany, however, because the company, which had already been largely prepared, was aborted in October 1918 under the pressure of events in the Balkans and the troops of the "Lehrkommision Kaukasus" were recalled. However, they arrived too late to save a tottering Bulgaria from collapse. General Kreß von Kressenstein remained in Georgia with part of his troops until December 1918.

In the final months of the First World War, the German Army and Air Force experienced a shortage of gasoline that cannot be properly explained. Production in Galicia and from the Reich continued undisturbed, while that from Romania increased steadily. All transport routes were free from bombing.

The quantities of fuel to be consumed dropped from 8400 to 7000 tons starting in September 1918, because the Navy supposedly had to divert larger quantities for submarine warfare. In reality, the Navy had its own independent sources for its diesel engines.

Nevertheless, gasoline was rationed as early as mid-August 1918. At the end of August, the main flight time was limited to 1 hour daily.

Out of six fighter squadrons per army, only two were deployed, while two were at rest and two on standby. This made life immensely easier for the Allied aviators.

After the collapse of Bulgaria, the German General Staff expected Romania to fall away again at the end of September 1918.

If General Ludendorff is to be believed, the thus threatened interruption of the oil supply from Romania was one of the reasons for the German army

command to demand an armistice from the Kaiser and the government.

Without additional Romanian oil, Germany expected to be able to continue the war for another 1-2 months: Only the U-boats could have continued to operate for 8 months without restriction.

Here Ludendorff was either misinformed or overly nervous: Even when Romania declared war on Germany under the impact of the events of November 1918, the Romanian oil territory was firmly in German hands.

Only when the Allies made the withdrawal of the German armies from all occupied territories a precondition for the cease-fire did Vienna and Berlin have to agree to withdraw their divisions from the eastern region.

This was particularly difficult for the German units stationed in Romania, since they considered themselves the victors. General August von Mackensen was initially reluctant to vacate what he called the "territories conquered in an honest struggle.

Also, after Ludendorff had recovered from his nervous depression (see below), the Supreme Army Command had ordered that Wallachia be held as long as possible because of the oil supply.

However, when Austria-Hungary, through whose territory the German oil tankers had to swim, concluded an armistice agreement with the Entente on November 3, the situation had become intolerable for the German troops and oil specialists stationed in Romania, especially since the armistice conditions also required the Germans to leave the territory of the Habsburg monarchy within 14 days.

There was a threat of strangulation and encirclement by the country's former allies, for whom it had gone to war in 1914.

It was not until November 4, 1918 that von Mackensen declared his willingness to carry out the evacuation. The newly formed Romanian government under General Constantin Coandă also made the ultimate demand on November 6. It had declared the old armistice and peace treaty with Austria and Germany invalid and saw itself back at war with Germany. However, there was no more fighting. Only when an area was cleared of Germans, Romanian troops moved in 24 hours later.

The general evacuation of Romania by the German army began on the night of November 10-11, 1918, when the First World War ended.

Unlike the Central Powers, the Entente was all pulling in the same direction. On November 23, 1918, Lord Curzon was able to declare at a victory banquet of the Interallied Petroleum Conference: "The Allies were carried to victory on a wave of oil."

CHAPTER 3

Did the USA really decide the First World War?

To this day, this thesis is held with great vehemence by the Allies, but also by the Germans - after all, it was a convenient thing for Germans of all political camps to explain the failure of all war efforts.

World War II the American way: risk-free profiteers?

"The war is an enormous opportunity for America," wrote banker J. P. Morgan Jr. as early as September 1914 to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who was elected to office with his financial support.

From the beginning, the U.S. elites did everything possible to support the Allied cause, even though they gave the appearance of strict neutrality to the outside world. To this end, they first called the war loans to England and France fraudulent, but on the other hand let them pass with complete impunity as "supplier credits" of private U.S. companies.

While the U.S. had an annual export surplus of one billion U.S. dollars at the beginning of the war, by 1916 it was already 1.6 billion - albeit per week. At that time, the USA was already supplying 40 percent of the weapons it needed to Russia, England and France.

However, the good times of carefree profiting from the slaughter of others in faraway countries came to an abrupt end in the winter of 1917/18, when the young Soviet Union concluded a separate peace with the Central Powers. The separate peace with Russia ended the war on two fronts and made a German victory on the Western Front entirely possible.

According to findings from recently declassified US files, the Americans, who were in financial distress, tried to take a bold action as a precaution. This was stated by the former Soviet ambassador in Bonn, Valentin Falin, at a conference of the Zinoviev Center in Moscow (*Sputnik Germany*, November 5, 2017). According to Falin, in the middle of the war, the German Emperor had been made an offer by the American President Wilson. To this end, Colonel House, Wilson's "gray eminence," had traveled to Berlin in late 1916 and advised Kaiser Wilhelm the following: Germany had a free hand for the purpose of destroying Russia. However, it would have to stop fighting the Entente states. At that time, everything looked like a victory of the Central Powers against

France and the United Kingdom. The decisive factor: Wilhelm II, according to Falin, rejected the offer.

Fig. 21 Edward Mandell "Colonel" House (1858-1936), Wilson's Gray

.His traveling diplomacy, launched in 1915 to broker an amicable
peace between the European
capitals,
only a sham The Grey House Memorandum of February 22, 1916
revealed the true intentions of the United States British Foreign Minister
Edward Grey did not want to negotiate with the enemy
nor want to "get involved in American mirror

alleged peace conditions

In order to prevent his own bankruptcy through the loss of astronomical war loans to the Allies, it was now necessary for J. P Morgan Jr. to incite the American people to war by all means.

It is undisputed that the USA would have been poorer than in 1914 even in the event of a truce. This had to be avoided.

The unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 and the strange telegram from the German Secretary of State Arthur Zimmermann came in handy as alibis to clarify the situation. On January 16, 1917, Zimmermann had instructed the German envoy to Mexico, Heinrich von Eckardt, in a ciphered dispatch to offer an alliance to the government there in the event that German-American hostilities actually occurred. However, British naval intelligence intercepted the telegram. This diplomatic folly was a welcome gift for U.S. propaganda.

Fig. 22 Arthur Zimmermann (1864-1940). In 1916 and 1917 he headed Foreign Office as State Secretary. One may wonder what got into the experienced diplomat: the content of his dispatch of January 19, 1917, to the German envoy in Mexico was negligent, the transmission amateurish. His telegram was simply an a joint war against the United States is also, for reasons that are still inexplicable, Zimmermann subsequently publicly confirmed the authenticity of the document

However, as we know today, the U.S. would have intervened directly in the war within a short time even without these occasions.

Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to England, telegraphed President Wilson on March 5, 1917:

The pressures of the approaching financial crisis now exceed the capacity of the House of Morgan's commitment to the British and French governments. [...] It is not unlikely that the only way to maintain our excellent trading position and avoid panic is to declare war on Germany.

The United States' declaration of war came shortly thereafter, on April 5, 1917.

The risk seemed manageable to the U.S. elites: maps make history. The geographic view of the United States is unique: oceans to the left and right, Canada above, Mexican desert below. As always, the secure location turned out to be an advantage for the U.S. in times of growing geopolitical risks.

This was also the case in 1917. Nevertheless, the U.S. entry into the war was very unpopular in America. Immediately prior to that, 90 percent of those polled were opposed to entering the war. Despite constant assurances that this war was a struggle "to end all wars" and to make "the world safe for democracy," few people in the United States were willing to sign up. Thus, in the first 6 weeks after the U.S. declared war, only 73000 volunteers showed up at the draft offices.

As a result, Congress was forced to introduce conscription. Now there were no more problems to provide fresh fodder for "Grim Reaper" on the Western Front.

In fact, the gigantic U.S. human effort on the European battlefields was a

desperate maneuver.

The Chairman of the Shipping Committee of the United States Chamber of Commerce, Edward Filene, wrote in the *New York World* on May 18, 1918:

At the request of the confederates, we are now sending crews to France in unreasonable quantities. We are sending them without having sufficient shipping space for their supplies. Literally, we are risking the lives of our boys on the assumption that America can provide the necessary shipping space.

How great must have been the concern of this expert if he dared to go public with such a confession at a critical hour!

Let us therefore consider how decisively the American military contribution affected the course of the war.

Legends formed until today: Was Germany's fight already lost with the declaration of war by the Americans?

On April 6, 1917, the USA declared war on the Empire. The battles of the First World War had already lasted three years. Suddenly, the USA, which until then had been formally neutral, decided to intervene in the war.

For decades, U.S.-centric historiography has persistently asserted that the Americans won World War I. Indeed, years later, German war veterans recounted how fresh, well-fed, and cleanly dressed U.S. troops in vast numbers gave them the impression that the war against the Entente could now no longer be won.

Within a few months, the Americans had managed to deploy over 2 million more soldiers in Europe by the end of the war. Undoubtedly, the extraordinary increase in U.S. forces since May 1918 was a surprise to the German side in the first few months, but by July the Germans had managed to correctly estimate their expected total strength.

The first operations took place from October 1917. A month later, there were the first three U.S. casualties, victims of a nighttime German commando raid.

In June 1918, in a small forest northeast of the Marne town of Chateau-Thierry, the U.S. Marine Corps' Second and Third Divisions engaged in their first major operation, which all of America later thought had decided the war

In a battle about 60 kilometers from Paris, the Americans succeeded in ending the German offensive with 50 percent of their own casualties, after French soldiers there had already given up and marched off partially without weapons.

According to French accounts, the sight of the marching Americans, well-fed and glowing with strength in their impeccable uniforms, worked wonders, and "an unspeakable confidence gripped French hearts." This moral effect thus saved the tottering Marne Front and Paris.

By the end of the war, however, the American landing forces suffered above-average losses compared to the British and French. This was largely

because their commander-in-chief, General Pershing, still believed in conservative frontal assaults, dismissed the French and British training methods developed from 4 years of war experience as overly cautious, and insisted on maintaining large and cumbersome divisions.

The operations of the American Expeditionary Force against the "Hindenburg Line" in September/October 1918 were then also tactically backward and wasteful. It was not until the last week of October that the German defenses were penetrated after a series of frontal assaults that claimed about 100000 U.S. casualties. The Americans' own military-technical developments, such as the small Ford tank or the first aircraft designs, disappointed.

According to Niall Ferguson, the most important achievement of the American Expeditionary Force was to "show up in France."

They were more useful in providing relief to British and French troops in quiet sections of the front and in making clear to the Germans the seemingly inexhaustible human reserves available to the Allies. The latter point in particular succeeded far beyond expectation, while the purely military effects were modest.

What is not communicated is by the people who today still claim that the Americans would have won the war for the Allies alone, that the U.S. involvement in France would have led to an unparalleled supply disaster within a short period of time if the war had not ended in time on November 11, 1918.

Already in October, the U.S. Army was severely hampered by supply problems. American soldiers looted their own supply convoys, others starved to death!

In the fight over the far too few open railroad tracks, French railroad employees and shirt-sleeved U.S. transport personnel got into massive fights, up to and including the use of weapons. The U.S. locomotives brought along proved to be too heavy for the poor French railroad tracks.

The morale of the U.S. soldiers also deteriorated: While they had initially viewed the war as a "happy picnic," the jingoism quickly disappeared during the Meuse-Argon offensive (beginning September 26, 1918) against German

machine-gun belts, elastic defenses, and 6-mile-deep artillery positions. The Vesle Valley became known to them only as the "Valley of Death."

U.S. General Hunter Liggett estimated that 100000 U.S. Army deserters were roaming the woods by mid-October 1918. He sent out patrols to recapture at least some.

Added to this was the fear of racial unrest. In fact, a black regiment of the 92nd Division had already broken down and run away on the second day of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Officers were particularly hated by white and black troops in the United States. Their poor leadership was blamed for many unnecessary casualties (*bad officering*).

The increasing urgency with which U.S. troops had to be thrown into combat is evidenced by the fact that, beginning in the summer of 1918, the young men shipped across the Atlantic could no longer spend months completing their training in French camps but were sent, barely trained, to the battlefields just a month after their arrival, where they were judged by the Germans to be "brave but untrained."

Most U.S. soldiers were war-weary at the end of the war and just wanted to go home. Only a few months of war had sufficed: Americans were just as morally exhausted as Germans, English and French. An irrepressible longing arose among them to settle accounts with the warmongers at home.

Despite their fighting lasting only a few months, some 126000 U.S. soldiers remained on the battlefields of Europe. Over 234000 were wounded.

In return, there were over 18,000 new millionaires in the United States in 1917 alone as a result of war profits. The fortune of a millionaire at that time was about equal to that of a billionaire in the 21st century. *The Great War was a good business!*

There is no doubt that the USA played a decisive role in the financial sphere. Without the large loans from the J. P. Morgan bank and the bonds of other rich Americans, the British would have had to stop the war in 1916 at the latest or would have encountered serious money problems as early as the mobilization in the summer of 1914. Millions of men might otherwise have remained alive.

The decisive loss of the "land bridge" by Bulgaria: Did U.S. Gold Influence the End of the War?

Finally, the Bulgarian surrender on September 29, 1918, was decisive for General Ludendorff's final nervous breakdown.

Until then, the Bulgarian army had successfully held the Macedonian front with relatively little German support. All attacks by the armies of French, Italians, Serbs, and Greeks had repeatedly stalled with terrible losses at Bulgarian machine gun positions on the peaks of the Vardar Mountains. In the ravines lay the unburied carcasses of English soldiers.

At the beginning of September 1918, news had reached Berlin that there was great war weariness in Bulgaria and that there were fears of a gradual disintegration of the Bulgarian army.

This had been preceded by a peace concluded between Germany and Romania. General Ludendorff had wanted to secure an economic area on the Black Sea for the Germans and thus had granted Bulgaria not all but only half of Dobruja as spoils of war. Over these disputes, Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov fell, and the pro-American Aleksandar Malinov took over his affairs in Sofia.

Since America was not at war with Bulgaria, the U.S. diplomatic representative did his utmost and sprinkled dollars and gold among the crucial people in politics and the military.

Allied leaflets threatened merciless conquest if Bulgaria did not capitulate immediately. When the Allied offensive began on September 15, two Bulgarian regiments were already on strike. The others initially remained in their positions, which had been impregnable for years, but would not fire back. After that they disappeared.

German officers, with pistols drawn, tried to stop the breakup, but they didn't stand a chance. They telegraphed for reinforcements.

In fact, the next Germans were at the Black Sea in sufficient numbers, but took 2 weeks. The German relief troops boarded the ships in Varna.

Now it depended on whether the Bulgarians would get off earlier than the Germans would arrive.

Where brave Bulgarian soldiers held their positions, they achieved the previous results. Thus, from the PiP hill only every third English soldier returned. The Greek Crete Division was also chased away by meadows shot on fire.

In other places, however, the Bulgarians deliberately let the Allies through. The commander-in-chief of the 2nd Division, Russew, betrayed his men and fled. The fleeing Bulgarian soldiers turned into marauders and set fire wherever they could in still-occupied Macedonia.

When the first Germans arrived in Bulgaria unexpectedly quickly from Sevastopol, it was too late. The Bulgarian army no longer existed. On September 29, 1918, in Thessaloniki, the Bulgarians had to sign the evacuation of Macedonia and the delivery of all weapons of war for surrender.

In a tremendous show of force, the Germans once again had troops deployed on the Bulgarian border to prevent the Austro-Hungarian lands from being threatened as well. This was all made worse by the fact that General Ludendorff knew about the Austrian secret negotiations with the Allies that had been going on for years.

It remains another gross failure of the paralyzed Supreme Army Command in the summer of 1918 not to have reacted to the looming danger in Macedonia.

As early as August 29, 1918, Wilhelm II had met with Tsar Ferdinand, who was staying in Bad Nauheim for a cure, and was horrified to hear from him that the Balkan front would collapse unless help arrived quickly. But that happened too late.

Even though no combat troops could be withdrawn from the Western Front this time, there were still enough soldiers in the Black Sea area. They were taken only when the Bulgarian army was already dispersing.

Thus, with Bulgaria, the land connection to the allied Ottoman Empire was lost, which would now also leave the war without supplies from Germany.

American money and gold thus had a decisive effect on the collapse of the Central Powers.

CHAPTER 4

Did everything go right from the summer of 1918?

The puzzling problem with German supplies

From the summer of 1918, as mentioned elsewhere, there were increasing shortages of material supplies for the Western Front.

When it comes to transporting weapons, ammunition and fuel, things look puzzling from today's perspective.

Transportation routes were not disrupted by air raids in 1918, as they had been during World War II. There had been few problems in previous years, and the German railroad was known for its reliability and precision. Nor did the railroads go on strike.

Industry at home was fully mobilized for the war effort; bombing of factories was virtually non-existent at the time.

However, complaints about inexplicable delays in material deliveries and sabotage-like obstacles, as exemplified by Zeppelin-Dornier-Werke, became more frequent.

The lack of food for people and horses was to prove fatal for the German war effort. This also had a direct military impact. Thus, the French Mangin offensive on July 18 at Villers-Cotterets was such a great success not least because General Charles Mangin bumped into the middle of the unprepared German labor columns. They were surprised just as they were working the man-high rye fields and lush reshot meadows with scythes to harvest much-needed food for men and horses in the fertile no-man's land on the seemingly quiet front. The German work crews could thus only throw up their hands as the French tanks emerged in packs from the waving corn.

On a different note, the German leadership had indeed received timely

advance warning of the Mangin attack, but for some unknown reason did not pass this on to the front.

Weapons and ammunition were ready in sufficient quantities at home - only, they did not come forward. This already announced itself in April 1918, when the first ammunition shortages became widespread, and then increased until the armistice.

Then, in April 1918, the last German attack against the British had to be abandoned prematurely for lack of heavy artillery ammunition.

Especially after August 8, "bottlenecks" in transportation became more frequent. In October 1918, for example, only gas ammunition could be fired during the defense against a decisive British attack, because normal shells were completely lacking.

While the new revolutionary submachine guns were largely left in the back of the depots, special "search companies" had to scour the battlefields for lost rifles and old ammunition.

Supply depots back home overflowed with unused state-of-the-art aircraft, and even the new LK-II tanks never arrived in the West.

It is striking that the Navy, which had its own supply organization, never reported such problems.

It has never been clarified exactly why all these unnecessary bottlenecks occurred so frequently when transport links were intact. Even the committee of inquiry of the German Reichstag, which was supposed to clarify the reasons for the German defeat in the post-war period and came across the supply delays, did not get an answer to this question.

What the army did not lack until the end were machine guns and the ammunition to go with them.

German MG rifle teams thus inflicted bitter losses on their opponents, often at self-sacrifice, until the armistice. This alone was not enough to stabilize the Western Front, although the Americans in particular expressed their highest praise for the fighting spirit of the mostly bloody young MG rearguards in the post-war period.

The German air-cooled MG 08 thus became the weapon that claimed the highest blood toll in the history of mankind. It still holds this macabre rank

today.

The alleged failure of the imperial submarine gun

German U-boats cruised the Atlantic in 1917/18, sinking ship after ship. The sinking figures increased immensely, but this was not enough to even noticeably prevent the transfer of the American army to Europe. Hence the question: Did the German submarines have to let the Americans come across the Atlantic?

When the USA entered the war in February 1917, the German admiralty promised that their soldiers would not even be allowed to cross the Atlantic. U-boats would sink the transport ships long before that!

This was the time when submarine sinking successes were climbing from peak to peak and the Allies were desperately wondering where else in the world they could find more ships and crews. As late as July 1917, therefore, Eduard von Capelle, Secretary of State in the Reichsmarineamt, had described the danger of the U.S. moving any troops to Europe as "nil."

But things turned out completely differently.

In fact, the Americans managed to send 1.8 million men to the Western Front by the end of the war, with minimal friendly losses of only three transports on the outward route to France. Four empty transport ships were destroyed by German submarines on the return trip.

Only with the help of the numerous U.S. escort ships was it possible for the Entente to carry out the Atlantic convoy protection without any gaps. The own home waters off the east coast of the USA remained carelessly as good as unprotected - but the German submarines were not allowed to come!

Interestingly, the Americans used former fast German Atlantic passenger liners for a large part of their troop transports.

ports and were seized by the USA in April 1917.

How can this apparent failure be explained? It is almost universally unknown today that the intensified submarine warfare in 1917 completely excluded a crucial sea area - the American East Coast.

Fig. 24 Merchant submarine "U-Deutschland" in Baltimore in 1916. After USA entered the war it was converted equipped with two 15-cm guns. In 1918 "U-155" visited USA again together with sister ship submarine 36 Allied ships in one mission, despite the strictest protective measures by the escorts

Kaiser Wilhelm II had already rejected unrestricted submarine in this area July 1917. Even in 1918, all efforts of the Admiral and the Supreme Army Command to open the East American were futile

The opportunity beckoned, especially to attack the American troopships directly shortly after they left the ports, before they could form their fast convoys.

On June 28, 1918, the emperor again unequivocally rejected the renewed request. He wanted to demonstrate that he had learned his lessons from the events of 1917. He pointed to the possible political damage that could result from such an action. This would be greater than the military success. Kaiser Wilhelm and Reich Chancellor Hertling were following whispers from the Foreign Office that unrestricted submarine warfare in American waters would make a possible understanding with the United States more difficult. That U.S. President Wilson in 1917 had sought only an occasion to finally send his country officially to war on the side of the Entente seems to have escaped these gentlemen. Or did they not?

The fact remains that the U.S. troopships had high-level German "guardian angels" until the end of the war.

Even in cases where U-cruisers did happen to encounter the American

fast steamers on their way out, conspicuous restraint prevailed, as if German commanders had to avoid possible sinkings of these ships in the immediate vicinity of the United States. In one incident, the reporting U-cruiser was given the radio order to "continue to pursue" the detected fast steamers, which had to be an illusion in view of the superior speed of these ships. The consequences could not fail to ensue.

Thus, at an OHL meeting on July 21, 1918, Crown Prince Rupprecht witnessed how General Ludendorff, after the failure of the last German offensive on the Marne and General Mangin's French counterattack, demanded that the Chief of the Admiral's Staff concentrate absolutely everything on sinking the American transport ships. Otherwise, the war would be lost!

He was told in no uncertain terms that such a policy would only stiffen U.S. resolve and do nothing to improve Germany's position.

The whispers of defeatist circles in the Foreign Ministry were thus able to gain more and more influence on the possibilities of imperial warfare in the last months of the war, but without even remotely persuading Germany's opponents to negotiate peace.

The question is whether they did not know better or whether they accepted their own defeat. In his memoirs, Kaiser Wilhelm also complained that he had been deliberately deceived by his foreign ministry.

In fact, unrestricted submarine warfare in American waters would have been easily possible in 1917/18.

During the summer of 1918, the U-boat cruisers and the minesweeper U-117 had impressively demonstrated that the long approach to the American East Coast was no problem for the big German U-boats and that it was possible to operate successfully there. In a very short time, the German submarine cruisers had sunk 3 dozen ships of the American fishing fleet with 110000 gross tons in the waters between Cape Hatteras in North Carolina and Newfoundland. This had great symbolic significance, but did not affect the fighting in France in the slightest.

Interestingly, the Admiral's Staff had to recall its submarine cruisers from American waters as early as October 10, 1918, 2 weeks before the general

cessation of submarine warfare. The "guardian angels" did not want to take any risks.

A counterexample here must be the extremely successful "Operation Paukenschlag," the offensive of the German submarine force against the United States in World War II, shortly after the United States entered the war. From January to June 1942, German submarines, only a handful of which were on the ground at any one time, sank 397 large ships along the U.S. East Coast, inflicting on the United States what was probably the greatest naval defeat in its history.

The Allies lost 1200000 gross tons of merchant shipping space in January-March 1942 alone; not a single submarine was lost there during that period.

Something similar would have been readily available to the Kaiser's U-boats in 1917/18 in the same sea area.

The impact of a psychological and strategic nature on the fighting on the Western Front would have favorably influenced a possible negotiated peace.

The prevented rescue of the "Siegfried Line

On July 15, 1918, despite sabotage of some of the tanks, six German tank divisions had managed to achieve considerable partial successes in the last major German offensive, "Marne Schutz."

Just one day later, German tank divisions were pulled out of the fray and used for peacetime training missions farther back, while Allied tanks flattened German infantry by the hundreds. Why was the armored counterattack called off in late September 1918?

When Marshal Foch's counteroffensive had forced the 17th, 2nd and 18th German Armies to fall back to the "Siegfried Position" in the last days of August 1918, the German Army Command ordered new rear positions to be dug out behind the battle zone. These were called the "Hunding and Brunhilde positions". It ran behind the Aisne-Champagne front from Marl via Soissons to Rethel and led from the Aisne to the Meuse.

By the end of September 1918, the Allies had approached the "Siegfried Position" or "Hindenburg Line," as the Allies called it, and prepared for their breakthrough. They had already failed bloodily at this task in 1917.

Now the Germans needed men and equipment to secure this line - but above all enough time. Did anyone want to prevent this? The problem was that since August 1918 the German army had to fight its battles in volatile fortified positions in the open field. At that time it still had 217 divisions, 186 of which were in the west. No fewer than 22 divisions had been disbanded in August, and the number of combat-fresh reserves had fallen to 14 divisions. Individual divisions provided only 2000 fighters; there were even units that barely had 1000 left.

Replacements from home had dried up, and the depots behind the front began to empty without replenishment from the full camps at home. Many thousands of vacationers did not find their way back to the front.

However, the opponent also suffered from a lack of people. This is hardly perceived today. England had already had to dissolve 10 divisions in May, and behind the French front it was teeming with miserable vacationers.

The great offensive of August 8 was feasible only with the help of the Canadians and Australians because of the previous large British losses, and General Haig knew that failure before the "Siegfried Position" would have fatal consequences for the Entente. Everything hoped for the Americans to fill the ever-increasing gaps.

Thus, not only the Germans, but also the armies of the Entente suffered from a great languor.

In this situation, on September 24, 1918, the Supreme Army Command had ordered the concentration of all combat vehicle detachments behind the front of the "German Crown Prince" Army Group. The combat vehicles were to be deployed at one point on the front in offensive defense in order to destroy enemy breakthroughs in a confined space.

According to this order, the A7V- Kampfwagenabteilungen 1-3 and the Beutekampfwagenabteilungen 11-16 were to be assembled by 30 September 1918. The combat vehicles, which, if they were not in the depot undergoing repair work, were standing around all over the Western Front for "training purposes," were to be concentrated immediately. By dispatching officers from the combat vehicle group, the area was to be reconnoitered for assembly and attack. The operation was planned with a limited objective to counterattack against an enemy that had broken in or even broken through.

Greatest importance was attached to secrecy under agreement of a keyword.

It was clear from this order that the Supreme Army Command was prepared to use strong reserves to ensure the planned withdrawal of the army fronts and to gain time, and that full confidence was placed in the battle-hardened German combat vehicle detachments.

These measures triggered the greatest frenzy among the German combat vehicle units. As a substitute for missing guns, armor-piercing T-guns (13 mm caliber) were installed in "Female" booty combat vehicles that had previously been equipped only with MGs. On September 25, readiness to march was ordered for September 28.

All divisions were in their quarters or at the army groups and were ready for loading. All preparations for the execution of the transport movements had been made.

However, the OHL had suddenly changed its mind. Only Divisions 1, 11, 13, 15 and 16 were now assigned to Army Group "Crown Prince Rupprecht", while the other divisions were to remain where they were to continue their militarily pointless training exercises. The Army Group "German Crown Prince" did not get a single combat vehicle division.

To this day, it is not known why the Supreme Army Command abandoned its original intention of deploying all available combat vehicles in a united effort. "Just not a closed and therefore promising operation," as Thomas Müller, the chronicler of the "Bayerische Sturm-Panzer-KraftwagenAbteilung13" equipped with Mark IV tanks concluded

Something could undoubtedly have been accomplished with twelve A7Vs and 35 Mark IV loot tanks.

Certainly the success of the German combat vehicles in the defensive battle with the 17th Army would have been more decisive if a larger number of combat vehicles had been available in one place.

Thus, however, the detachments located there were mechanically strained to an extremely high degree by longer marches, which resulted from the position of the battle front, so that they were often no longer fully usable in the execution of the counterattacks. Was it intentional or incompetent?

The three tank divisions, which had been assigned for "training purposes," did not see any action at all until the armistice.

That even in a late situation the support of a few tanks could be decisive was demonstrated by the deployment of Divisions 1 and 13. With a few tanks, they not only caused devastating losses to the enemy in a single action on October 11 during the "Hunderttageschlacht," but also thwarted their attempt to break through at a depth of 12 kilometers.

One A7V combat vehicle (Kampfwagen 3) under Lieutenant Ernst Volckheim alone chased two English regiments into flight and produced hundreds of casualties among the attackers, who had not in the least expected the appearance of German tanks. He advanced 8 kilometers behind the front!

These were only local successes; in this case, only the three German A7Vs could be properly used, as the British prey tanks (allegedly?) developed mechanical problems. "Sturm-PanzerKampfwagen-Abteilung13" recorded a sabotage of its Mark IV tanks in October 1918 that was never solved

Without concerted German tank action, neither the "Siegfried Line" nor the "Hunding Line" could be held.

One might be inclined to ask whether this was precisely the desired effect. A German defensive victory would have removed all "urgency" from the demands for an armistice.

It was similar in the case of the mobile artillery regiments. After the "Black Day of the German Army", five (according to other sources six) artillery regiments had been put on trucks with 7.7-cm FK96 n. A. field guns.

Not a single deployment of these highly mobile regiments is known!

Where were the German wheeled tanks in the summer of 1918?

In 1918, the German Army had a small but powerful force of wheeled tanks. These included not only vehicles made by domestic manufacturers such as Büssing, Daimler and Ehrhardt (Rheinmetall), but also Western looted vehicles of the Austin, Fiat, Lancia, Minerva, Peugeot, Rolls-Royce and Packard types, as well as numerous Russian types such as products of the Putilov company.

The wheeled tank divisions were almost all in the east in the summer of 1918, conducting successful operations as far east as the Caucasus and in the Black Sea area.

Only two German Ehrhardt wheeled armored cars of Panzer-KraftwagenMG Platoon³ successfully appeared in the Lys Offensive in April 1918, where, together with a Bavarian wheeled company, they penetrated enemy lines several times. Shortly thereafter, Platoon 3 was also moved east.

The change in strategic initiative after August 8, 1918, along with the Entente's successful use of British Austin wheeled tanks on the Western Front, caused alarm in the Imperial Army.

All German wheeled tank detachments were hastily ordered to the Western Front by rapid rail transport, even though this provoked the strongest protests from commanders in the East.

Behind this was the correct idea of using the wheeled tanks to protect dismounted movements, as also contained in the relevant service regulations. Panzer-Kraftwagen platoons 2, 4, and 8 were to be assigned to the 19th Army, while platoons 3, 5, 6, and 7 were to be assigned to Army Division B. From home, the newly established platoons 10 and 11 were to go to Army Group "Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern." This distribution already did not make much sense if the armored cars were really to be used for combat operations. Thus, Army Group B in Upper Alsace was not affected by the enemy offensives at all. Its front sector was quiet, and it was to remain so until the end of the war.

The same applies to the area of the 19th Army in Lorraine and east of the Moselle River. Only the Bavarians, with the Panzer-Kraftwagen-MG-Zügen 10 and 11, received exactly the units they had originally sent east. However, they received their wheeled tanks back in unusable condition.

After repairs, the two platoons of Bavarians were moved to the 6th Army area, again away from the gun smoke.

Thus, no front-line use of these units took place in the West until the end of the war. All of the Panzer-Kraftwagen-MG platoons were instead used for harmless patrols behind German lines in the Alsatian and Lorraine mountains, for antiaircraft defense, and as radio stations to link regimental and divisional command posts. The impression thus suggests itself that the German wheeled tanks were deliberately held back from possible front-line use in the decisive defensive battles, however desperately the hard-pressed armies cried out for support.

was used, as originally planned, to secure the retreat
struggling front

In the few cases where Allied wheeled tanks actually encountered their German counterparts in the west in 1918, they were probably captured vehicles that had been captured during the German spring offensives and were now pitted against their former owners with new insignia.

There are two possible explanations to the question of why the German Panzer-Kraftwagen platoons, fully concentrated on the Western Front from August to November 1918, did not appear in combat.

Either it was deliberate sabotage to weaken the own defense efforts or the intention to keep the German armored vehicles ready for possible defense against internal unrest and mutinies. The suitability of the vehicles to keep crowds at bay and to fight effectively during demonstrations and street fighting was well known.

On November 6, 1918, a week before the armistice was announced, the Supreme Army Command ordered the transfer of armored car platoons home to the Reich part of the first measures against a coup in Berlin. The first of these was Platoon 8.

If the diary of Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht is to be believed, shortly

before the end of the war, on November 9, 1918, Panzer-Kraftwagen-Züge 10 and 11, together with aircraft and booty tanks, were deployed against a serious mutiny by Marine Corps replacement troops at the Beverloo military training area in Belgium (Limburg province).

After the armistice was concluded, all PanzerKraftwagen-MG platoons in Berlin, Wünsdorf and Eisenach were held at the disposal of the OHL

Instead of being used against the enemies of the Reich in the West, the PanzerKraftwagen then became a decisive weapon of the new Freikorps against communist uprisings in Germany and against Poles in Upper Silesia in 1919

The Versailles Dictate then brought an end to this as well.

Was submarine warfare abandoned prematurely?

The U-boat war was the only weapon in the German arsenal which taught the Allies to fear until the last moment.

In the fall of 1918, he was definitely "facing a new turning point" to the disadvantage of the Allies. At the latest after September 21, 1918, this was also communicated to the responsible people in the German leadership, i.e. 2 weeks before they naively sent the peace offer to the American President Wilson.

Despite Wilson's already relatively negative initial response, the German leadership showed itself ready to abandon submarine warfare immediately - without even the slightest counter-guarantees.

The Chief of the Admiral's Staff of the German Navy pleaded with the new German Chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, that the order to end submarine warfare be given at the earliest after the armistice had been signed in return for the highest possible consideration from the enemy. More detailed reasoning was offered.

Nevertheless, as early as October 10, 1918, the German submarine cruisers were recalled from the American coast. The politicians newly in power in Berlin did not allow themselves to be talked into it. Of course, they did not receive any consideration from Wilson for their advance performance.

The U.S. President's next reply, dated October 14, 1918, contained a single indictment of German naval warfare. It was based on false British "evidence" that orders existed ordering the sinking of merchant ships specifically after the German peace move was initiated.

This was reinforced by German Foreign Minister Wilhelm Solf, who claimed to have heard "from a good source" that an order to intensify submarine warfare had gone to the Navy about 14 days earlier. The German foreign minister unhesitatingly used the propaganda of the war opponents to enforce the defeatist concept of his ministry.

When Reich Chancellor Prince Max von Baden urged immediate halt to submarine warfare ostensibly to facilitate peace negotiations with the

United States, Kaiser Wilhelm II ruled in favor of the chancellor and imposed a formal halt to submarine warfare against merchant ships

Consequently, on October 24, 1918, the submarines received radio orders to retreat and prohibit any commercial warfare.

The fact is that after the cessation of submarine warfare, the Allies now had even less reason to show moderation in their demands after Germany had also withdrawn its last strategic weapon without any quid pro quo.

CHAPTER

Full steam ahead into the abyss

Turmoil and Morale Decline in the German Army and the "Weather Glow" on the Home Front

By the end of 1917, the Empire had achieved brilliant military successes in the West (Cambrai), in the East (Russia) and on the Isonzo against Italy. Nevertheless, in Germany, as in all European countries, demonic forces had risen up against the authorities as representatives of the old order.

Best-selling author Werner Beumelburg described this increasing "weather glow" over the home front as follows:

Signs of declining moral strength were strikes, while on the other side war profiteers were splurging and the people were suffering from the hunger blockade. [...]

The armaments worker sat at home in safety with his wife and child and received a relatively high wage. The soldier at the front received a few pennies and had to stake his life day after day. This undermined "patriotic morale in a frightening way." [...]

The army command was aware that forces were stirring within Germany that threatened the spirit of patriotic morality and strict warfare. They could not be fought because of an irreconcilable antagonism between the army leadership and the Reich government, which in turn divided the people into two camps. In these murky waters of political discord, "fishermen could set to work" whose goals no longer had anything in common with patriotism.

Evidence shows that the Imperial Army was in revolt and mutiny long before November 1918, especially among troops returning from Russian captivity, in the stage, and among troops brought in by forced recruitment as a result of the munitions workers' strikes.

Thus, from the beginning of the March Offensive in 1918, the German Army saw an increase in mutinies, desertions, attacks on superior officers, and refusals to obey orders, although the overall numbers were still very low at the time.

It was noticeable that the number of German soldiers going into captivity was already increasing.

As a warning signal perceived very closely by the German army command, entire units had refused to leave the trenches at all during the Lys offensive, while the elite assault troops had urgently needed their support.

However, at the same time, the English experienced similar problems with Irish troops. The Irish were accused, not without reason, of wanting to shoot English soldiers in the back at the first opportunity.

In fact, the highest German circles feared the outbreak of a revolution if the war continued for another winter. By the end of January 1918, it had already raised its head openly in Germany and Austria-Hungary. Mass strikes in Vienna, Berlin and many other cities paralyzed munitions production, and workers' councils were formed. The purpose was not only to end the war, but to overthrow the government.

Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the SPD, also joined the Berlin strike leadership, and the Social Democratic party newspaper *Vorwärts* declared Germany's military successes an obstacle to peace. The strikes were once again militarily suppressed, and the radical munitions workers were drafted into army service. This was to be bitterly avenged later!

More and more replacement troops and units transferred from the East to the Western Front seemed to be infected by the "virus of Bolshevism" from spring 1918. German field letters to the homeland, which were read by the censors, revealed an increasing "spirit of Marxism" among many soldiers. Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht also noted this in his diary on August 3, 1918, shortly before the great Allied offensive.

The number of so-called "shirkers", i.e. soldiers who evaded front-line service, which was considered a disguised mutiny at the time, was already estimated at 500,000 men in April 1918. After that, their number increased day by day to over one million. It got to the point that a German local commander asked for reliable troops to help him cope with the chaos behind the front.

Other conscripts successfully evaded the draft and went into hiding undetected. As one former front-line soldier recalled, at the beginning of August 1918, of the original 3000 soldiers in a reserve regiment, only 84

men arrived at their destination. The Berlin police chief estimated that 50000 deserters alone were in Berlin in the summer of 1918.

Of those who went to the front as replacements, especially the young Marxist munitions workers who had been on strike at home proved to be a terrible test for the fighting morale of the front-line soldiers.

In the spring of 1918, Manfred von Richthofen's mother reported to the flying ace about working-class neighborhoods where no policeman dared to enter and where gunfire whipped through the streets at night. Von Richthofen's mood darkened because he saw more and more the downfall of the old order coming.

USPD leader Georg Ledebour announced after the revolution on December 16, 1918, at the "Reichstagung" of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Germany:

But it was we who worked the front. And the former government provided us with excellent agitators by sending out to the front all those suspected of the January strike.

Germany's wartime adversaries directly benefited militarily from this failure.

On the "Black Day" of Amiens on August 8, 1918, the revolutionaries ran away in droves, insulting rushing elite formations and the artillery, which often resisted to the point of self-sacrifice, as "strikebreakers."

Entire units allowed themselves to be captured by individual Allied soldiers without touching the battlefield, while others held their positions, already bypassed by Entente soldiers, to the last man and, in spite of everything, killed more opponents than their own men fell by the end of the fateful battle.

The rapid loss of the fearsome "Hindenburg Line" in the fall of 1918 was also essentially due to the "morale problem" of a German unit. The British General Douglas Haig had also feared a mutiny among his own soldiers if their attack against the "Hindenburg Line" should again fail with great losses, as it had in 1917. His worries, however, turned out to be unfounded.

Fig. 31 Marxist leaflet dropped by Allied planes in the West

.Proof of the cooperation between Marxists and the Entente

!

The morale problem of the German army in the final phase of the war was so glaring that a large part of the German losses consisted of soldiers who surrendered voluntarily. Between the Mangin Offensive (July 18) and November 11, 1918, 340000 German soldiers surrendered. During the entire 4 years prior, the Allies had only been able to bring in about 90800 captured "field grays."

In fact, German military jurisdiction became progressively more lenient during the course of the war. Death sentences were the great exception, and courts-martial were increasingly reluctant to hand out prison sentences. Calls by the Supreme Army Command to reverse this failed because the military courts did not want to impose harsher sentences.

Quite the opposite of their Allied counterparts!

At the same time, the desertion in Germany was organized according to plan. This, too, was allegedly not properly perceived by the responsible authorities.

Here, the so-called "International Revolutionary Youth Movement" was active. Central offices of this deserter organization were located in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Stuttgart and Munich.

Here the would-be draft dodgers received accommodation, false papers, money and directions to the border. Main marching routes led to Holland and Denmark. The deserters published their own newspaper in Holland and formed their own soldiers' councils during the November Revolution, which temporarily even represented a political power factor.

These processes were supported by the English world travel agency "Thomas Cook" and the English agent Richard B. Tinsley, who lived in Holland. These sent their people to Germany to stir up discontent to the boiling point. Agents in German military uniforms were traveling in Germany with money donated by major English, French, and American industrialists to whip up the "passions of the people" and induce soldiers to

desert. Some captured agents carried sums of 20000 to 30000 Reichsmarks. They were merely imprisoned by the German authorities until the armistice and then released.

The revolt and moral decay of the young generation was supported by Entente pamphlet propaganda, which increased to the extreme. The materials dropped by airplanes and balloons over German trenches were very diverse in their range of topics. They ranged from simple pictures to statements by German socialists about the imperial house and even open calls for revolution.

Bolshevik propaganda through the new Russian embassy in Berlin also proved to be a successful source. It could be detected and stopped only in early November 1918, when it was already too late! The seriousness of the situation at that time was underlined by the fact that the German Supreme Army Command (OHL) decided in the fall of 1918 to drop leaflets over its own troops. They warned the soldiers against the enemy's front propaganda.

In it, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, in a desperate appeal to the German army and the homeland, implored them to resist this "battle against the German spirit." According to Hindenburg, the enemy was working with a barrage of printed paper and was also poisoning the spirit in the homeland. The appeal finally warned against all traitors to the fatherland.

Certain army orders also forcefully pointed to enemy propaganda.

German army leaders in the summer and fall of 1918 certainly saw the morale problem and believed they could get the matter under control again if the army were allowed to rest for a few weeks to consolidate and to give the worn-out troops relief in a calmer front.

It never came to that, although the Allies themselves were in dire need of peace at the time of the armistice.

Yet the demonstrable German decline in fighting morale from the summer of 1918 onward was nothing compared to the catastrophe that befell the French in May 1917.

At that time there was a complete internal collapse of the French army. According to the then Minister of War, Paul Painleve, there was dejection and discouragement among the troops, resentment and indignation among the front-line officers against the leadership and army command, mistrust

and lack of openness among all military ranks. Never had the French army gone through such a terrible and moral crisis as at the beginning of May 1917!

French holidaymakers sang the Internationale and shouted, "Long live peace!" Regiments refused to obey when they were to be sent to the front; other units stormed the train stations to get to Paris, march against Parliament, and carry out the revolution. Many regiments elected soldiers' councils and entrenched themselves in their lodging places.

At that time, there were no more than two divisions between Soissons and Paris on which the French leadership could rely unconditionally.

According to French experts, a weak advance of the German army would have been enough to guarantee a complete German victory. For reasons unknown to this day, it never came, although German shock troops and a test attack proved the weakness of the French front!

With great energy, Prime Minister Clemenceau, and especially the new commander-in-chief General Petain, then succeeded in putting down the mutiny of the French army.

The rumbling regiments had to be decimated by the machine guns of the black colonial troops, while emerging revolutionary currents among the people were suppressed with dictatorial cruelty. There was a ruthless crackdown, 150 death sentences were imposed, but only 23 of them were actually carried out.

Petaín's instruction of the troops did not fail to have an effect either.

Thus, by the beginning of July 1917, order had been restored and the regiments made ready for use again. The crisis was overcome to some extent, and the catastrophe that was already on the doorstep was avoided.

In the summer of 1918, the German side proved to be completely incapable of doing anything even remotely comparable. The chances of success would have been very slim in view of the fact that the He had to start his attempt to discipline the French army, which had completely collapsed internally, from scratch, and he succeeded!

Fig. 32 One of the rare photos showing an execution during the "mutinies" within the French army in 1917. The main reason the mutinies were probably the humiliating defeat of the French army

at the Battle of the Chemin des Dames in the spring
.The offensive led by General Nivelle claimed some 200,000 dead and
wounded on French
side alone

Instead, in response, the German side tried to cut off field mail traffic to the homeland, which only led to more bitterness.

Germany lacked a Petain and a Clemenceau in 1918.

Not even an attempt was made by the rulers of the empire to save the old state. Could nothing be done about it, or did they not want to?

Instead, they later capitulated without resistance at the mercy of the Allies. According to General Ludendorff, this happened because the weak civilian government around Max von Baden knew in advance about the revolution planned for November 9.

The Allies' main goal was seen as bringing about an overthrow of the monarchy in Germany, but not a Bolshevik revolution, which could also have endangered the Entente.

So they made the coup "from above" and still failed, because the Allies, contrary to expectations, did not show mercy even to an "emperor-free" Germany. It was about geopolitics and world trade, not about old ruling houses!

No one played a more pathetic role in Germany's defeat than the German bourgeoisie and the German civil service, which shortly before had assured Kaiser Wilhelm II of its loyalty. Shortly after the end of the war, this gave rise to the story of the "stab in the back of the homeland against the fighting front.

It became one of the "nails in the coffin" of the democratic Weimar Republic. Branded as a "conspiracy theory" by the victorious powers after 1945, it is now discussed more narrowly as an "endogenous factor.

Fig. 33 The Doullens meeting on March 21, 1918 initiated by Clemenceau proved decisive. From left:

Pétain, Foch (with stick in hand), Haig, Clemenceau and Poincaré

At this meeting, Foch was charged with coordinating the operations of the two

Haig (on the British side) and Pétain

Only 5 days later, during the Battle of Amiens, Foch closed and stabilized the British front.

Did General Ludendorff's "burn-out" herald the end of the empire?

An almost fatal weakness of German strategy in World War I had its origins in the political structure of the empire.

The authority of both the Reich Chancellor and the Kaiser diminished as the war progressed. The politicians of the Reichstag in Berlin became increasingly defiant.

The military took power, and the Supreme Army Command (OHL) under Hindenburg and Ludendorff exercised a "silent," that is, unofficial military dictatorship after 1916.

In practice, it was General Ludendorff alone who determined German strategy and many other areas. At first he was very successful, but then the constant overtaxing of the forces of this arguably greatest strategist of World War I began to take its toll in the double battle against the Entente and the adversaries in the Berlin Reichstag. Added to this was his incessant preoccupation with minute details to the point of bogging down.

In mid-July 1918, when the offensives threatening Paris had failed before Rheims, his staff officers noticed in him "huge" nervousness: excellence switched to "completely broken", he was working himself to pieces.

Already on April 25, Ludendorff's nervousness and timidity had prevented the timely exploitation of the German breakthrough at Kemmelberg and possibly saved the French front.

On July 17, during the French Mangin offensive, he moaned, "This is the breakdown!" His nerves could hardly hold out any longer. Admittedly, something similar had happened before, when Ludendorff at the time of the peace negotiations with Russia in Brest-Litovsk first referred to agreements of the Crown Council and then formally denied their existence.

After the serious failure of the 2nd German Army on August 8, 1918, the actual ruler of the battles and the Empire seemed "no longer normal". His hands trembled incessantly.

In their distress, his entourage sent the neurologist Dr. Hochheimer into

the middle of a meeting on September 2, 1918, on the grounds that it was an "urgent personal discussion."

Dr. Hochheimer explained to Ludendorff, who was surprised at first, that he had to treat the soul of the First Quartermaster General. Body and soul were "distorted and stiffened". Only by sleeping, walking and breathing could he gain new creative power, Dr. Hochheimer said. Today we would call his condition "burn-out."

The doctor drew up a plan, which suited Ludendorff. He fulfilled it as conscientiously as he did his military service.

The therapy seemed to be working, but Bulgaria's withdrawal from the coalition with Germany on September 28, 1918, and with it the loss of the land bridge to allied Turkey, triggered another psychological crisis for Ludendorff.

While still in the midst of therapy, the patient Ludendorff sought out his nominal superior, Hindenburg, and reportedly informed him that the situation of the army demanded an immediate cease-fire to prevent a catastrophe.

He wanted to throw the heavy burden off him now. The armistice should be requested immediately, immediately. It appears that Ludendorff's poor health was exploited by officers of his staff. Thus, on September 26, Wilhelm Heye, Hermann Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, and Paul von Bartenwerffer arbitrarily informed the Foreign Office, which was only waiting for such an occasion, that peace negotiations were to begin immediately. From the Berlin officials Wilson's "Fourteen Points" then came into play. With this, they approached the physically ailing Ludendorff. The Kaiserreich's doom now took its course.

To his completely surprised interlocutors, the First Quartermaster General said that he had lived 6 weeks in the conviction that he had demanded the necessity of peace steps in the Crown Council of August 14, 1918.

Participants in the meeting recalled, however, that Ludendorff had aroused strong ideas there about an unshakable German defense.

It is very likely that Ludendorff had never read Wilson's "Fourteen Points". In the opinion of those around him, he believed that the "Fourteen

Points" consisted of broad generalities that were open to many interpretations.

For Ludendorff it was certain that in the armistice he planned Germany would benefit from its advantageous positions in the possession of Belgium and France (coal mines of Longwy).

He believed that this would allow Germany to retain parts of its conquests in the East in exchange for concessions in the West. Certainly, however, Germany would not forfeit any other territories it had possessed before the outbreak of war.

Enervated by the constant squabbling with the Berlin parliament and the SPD-backed munitions workers' strikes in the Reich, Ludendorff reportedly made the following statement in an address to his officers on October 1, 1918:

But I have asked His Majesty now to bring to the government those circles to whom we are mainly indebted for having come this far. [...] They should now make the peace that must be made. [...] They should now spoon out the soup that they have brought us.

Fig. 34 Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937). Since the Bulgarian defeat in September, his psychological overload had increased to the point of burnout. His proposal to the civilian leadership of the Reich and the Kaiser to accept an armistice and peace on the basis of Wilson's "Fourteen Points" caused shock and dismay.

Ludendorff's word was command, despite his obvious mental illness.

Consequently, a new government was formed in Berlin on October 3, 1918, under Prince Max von Baden, for the first time with Social Democratic participation.

On the night of October 3 to 4, the Reich government cabled an armistice offer to Washington via Switzerland.

German politicians who were unrealistic had assumed that peace could be concluded on the basis of the Fourteen Points that U.S. President Wilson had announced to Congress on January 8, 1918.

However, in case the negotiations failed, Quartermaster General Ludendorff was determined to wage a "final battle of army and fleet."

It was stated in an imperial decree on October 5:

If the enemy rejects the honorable peace, every German knows that he must continue to fight until his last breath.

Things were to turn out differently! The German offer of an armistice was followed by a lengthy exchange of notes between Berlin and Washington until the beginning of November 1918.

It soon became clear that Wilson's "Fourteen Points" applied only to the Allies. From October 23, 1918, it was clear that the American government demanded nothing from Germany but unconditional surrender.

In the meantime, Ludendorff had recovered psychologically. He recognized his fatal mistake and now wanted to let the fighting continue. The situation was not hopeless, the Allies were getting weaker and Germany had the advantage of short lines.

This time, the politicians in Berlin did not let the OHL take the reins out of their hands again.

The Foreign Office and its state secretaries in particular successfully

intrigued the emperor, who showed only fear for the continued existence of his dynasty.

Official documents from the Reich Chancellery still allow us to understand the intrigues of the politicians today. They succeeded! On the evening of October 26, von Hindenburg had to withdraw his decree to fight on. It was over!

Ludendorff submitted a request for his dismissal to the Kaiser on the same day. It was accepted at the insistence of Max von Baden's government.

Ludendorff was succeeded on October 29, 1918, by his opponent General Wilhelm Groener, until then head of the field railways and a sympathizer of the SPD.

Groener reportedly saw his task now only in organizing an orderly retreat and ending destruction during it.

On his very first day in office as Quartermaster General, he prevented Kaiser Wilhelm II from returning home to defeat the burgeoning revolution. On November 6, 1918, Groener informed Reich Chancellor Max von Baden that he would have to ask for an immediate armistice, and on November 9 he demanded that his emperor abdicate.

Shortly thereafter, Groener suppressed an officer revolt against the new system.

A year later, he strongly recommended that the Weimar government sign the Versailles Peace Dictate.

Later, Groener suffered from accusations of not having done enough for his emperor as a "red quartermaster general" and of having helped to unwind the old system.

It is indisputable that Ludendorff was in fact partly responsible for Germany's rapid abandonment of the war, even if he mistakenly believed that his initiative would allow the war to end on the basis of an "undecided."

When he realized his mistake, it was too late!

Thus, the illness of one man led directly to the downfall of the Second German Reich.

There had already been a case of illness that destroyed an empire: Let us recall the Battle of Waterloo, when Napoleon I, weakened by a nocturnal attack of epilepsy, had to retreat from the battlefield at the decisive moment

on June 18, 1815, and Marshal Ney, without imperial supervision, frittered away what was at first a battle with good chances.

Russian secret archives bring the truth to light after 100 years

Deep in Russian archives, treasures from Germany are still waiting to be discovered. Among them were the previously unpublished records of leading German intelligence officer Walter Nicolai. Published excerpts unearth the unbelievable. On October 26, 1918, the head of German military intelligence, Lieutenant Colonel Nicolai, was lying in bed, weak from influenza, when the Swedish military attaché, Colonel Nils Adlercreutz, sent for him urgently. The colonel first apologized for his unusual appearance and then got down to business:

What he is doing now is not in accordance with his duties as a neutral military attaché, but after having witnessed our military struggle for four years, he feels obliged to speak as a soldier and comrade. He implores me not to lay down our arms, he knows the reports of his comrades from Paris and London. I do not ask him for details, but I gather from his hints that in both capitals and governments the same internal difficulties against the continuation of the war existed as with us, and that the enemy's will to fight was on the verge of collapse in the face of the Bolshevik danger threatening them, too, if Germany remained firm.

Nicolai thanked the Swede for his intervention, but it was too late, "since Ludendorff was dismissed this morning. The doom for Kaiser Wilhelm's empire inexorably took its course.

The biggest scam since the Trojan horse? Wilson's "Fourteen Points"

The circumstances surrounding how the militarily battered but still undefeated empire threw in the towel so quickly in October 1918 remain shrouded in a fog of lies to this day.

It all began with the German request for an armistice to US President Wilson, which surprised the world.

A cease-fire is concluded with the expectation that a cessation of hostilities will leave the warring parties with every option. Sometimes this leads to the failure of negotiations, and hostilities resume thereafter, while in other cases peace ensues. In the fall of 1918, it sealed Germany's fate.

In fact, the new German government of Reich Chancellor Max von Baden, under the pressure of the psychological nervous breakdown of "military dictator" General Ludendorff in the night of October 3 to 4, 1918, had been carried away to ask the American President Wilson to initiate negotiations for the immediate conclusion of an armistice, based on the "14 plus 4" program points of the American President of January and February 1918.

The plan for this had been prepared long in advance in the German Foreign Office and only needed to be pulled out of the drawer.

It is one of the mysteries of history why no one among the German officials had the idea that this might have been a wartime ruse by Woodrow Wilson, the enemy of Germany.

Originally, Wilson's "Fourteen Points" had been announced on January 8, 1918, the day after Lenin's offer of a separate peace with Germany. The U.S. president had presented his "Fourteen Point Program" only two months after the Russian People's Commissars had issued a decree on peace between Russia and Germany and Austria.

Since Wilson's "Fourteen Points" did not provide for annexations or reparations, the U.S. president wanted in this way to prevent a separate peace and to thwart peace negotiations between Russia and the German Reich.

Wilson hoped that soldiers on both sides of the Eastern Front would voluntarily lay down their arms and rise up against their governments in the hope of an "ideal world. According to the French historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, Wilson's aim was to trigger a "subversive revolution.

Another thrust was also the hostile multi-ethnic states of Turkey and Austria-Hungary, whose dissolution into independent countries was demanded.

The "Fourteen Points" were invented by Walter Lippmann, a 28-year-old presidential advisor. His influence on the technique of U.S. propaganda was enormous. Lippmann had successfully avoided military service, which he, on the other hand, demanded for other young Americans, and was put in place by Morgan partner Willard Straight.

On February 11, 1918, they added four more points, which were promulgated on April 6, addressed by Wilson to Germany, as follows:

We are not jealous of German greatness, and there is nothing in this program whereby it is diminished. We do not wish to injure Germany or in any way inhibit her legitimate influence or power. [...] We do not wish to fight Germany, either with arms or with hostile methods of trade, if she is willing to join us and other peace-loving nations with treaties of justice, right, and fairness. We wish only that Germany should occupy a place of equality among nations, rather than of supremacy.

This sounded quite conciliatory in the face of a material war that had been raging for years and was thus suggested to the outside world by Anglo-American propaganda. This was controlled by the so-called "Association of Friends of German Democracy," which had been formed in New York under the intellectual leadership of the German émigré and multimillionaire Otto Kahn.

After the complete failure of the initial U.S. propaganda against Germany, which was taken from the liberalist ideas of emigrant German democrats of the 1848 uprising, Kahn had discovered something more effective: a new "Trojan horse" would be sent out against the insubordinate Central Powers.

From that moment on, Wilson's "Fourteen Points" made their appearance. The USA was thus to be given the role of an honest broker, which had been forced into the war only for reasons of the criminal submarine war and which was concerned only with higher ideals - for the good of all mankind.

The calculation of the Wall Street wire-pullers worked out: A saving possibility dawned in many German minds, to be able to emerge from this war with honors!

In this case, Lippmann's propaganda idea had almost overwhelming, fateful consequences all the way up to the German Kaiser. A drumfire of the Allied and neutral world press began, and suddenly an echo came from the German people of the homeland that grew stronger and stronger.

A people of 70 million began to believe in Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and, in this deceptive hope, asked for a just truce, only to fall out without resistance, betrayed from this illusion.

The German political intelligence service, which had only been created during the war when Deputy Erzberger offered himself to the Foreign Office for this purpose, had also contributed to this.

While Erzberger was a shrewd politician from the point of view of interparliamentary life, in terms of capabilities he was completely inferior to the statesmen on the opposite side. His entanglement in German party politics also caused him to neglect the objectivity that was urgently needed in wartime and instead to make foreign policy intelligence the tool of a preconceived opinion, the idea of understanding at any price, to the point of accepting his own defeat. From there, it was not far to the betrayal of one's own interests.

Thus, according to the former chief of the intelligence service of the Supreme Army Command, Colonel Walter Nicolai, the role of this political intelligence service in the World War and its influence through the position of Representative Erzberger in the Reichstag on wide, bona fide circles became disastrous.

According to Nicolai, this weakness was recognized by the enemy and exploited to deceive the German people. Nicolai's military intelligence service (Division III b), on the other hand, reported the inexorable truth that this was nothing but a perfidious stratagem of war.

These reports were the basis for the later request of the Supreme Army Command at the end of October to resume fighting and, according to Hindenburg's warning, "not to put the rifle to the wall one minute too soon."

However, not only the military intelligence, but also Prince Max of Baden, who was considered liberal and the last Chancellor of the Empire,

shared this warning. Max von Baden wrote:

If this was correct, then the planned cry for help had to lead to our armies of millions throwing away their weapons and the mob of the enemies jubilantly starting the death hunt.

Max von Baden, who was by no means a member of the holdout party, realized that the peace offer of October 3 served more to relieve Ludendorff's stress and that hopes for Wilson were deceptive. It was of no use that Max called on the banker von Warburg, one of the best experts on American conditions, who, as a civilian, warned the decision-makers: "I implore you, don't call it a day now!"

Kaiser Wilhelm II followed Ludendorff and the whispers of the Foreign Office. He gave the order to submit the armistice offer to the Allies via Switzerland during the night of October 3 to 4, 1918. Thus, without knowing it, he had gambled away his throne.

However, the country's entrepreneurs knew that this meant the days of the old regime were numbered. On October 9, the leading iron industrialists met in Düsseldorf with the aim of discussing ways to avert revolution (!) and socialization.

They suspected quite correctly that Max von Baden's government would not be able to hold out for more than 4 to 5 weeks, and they estimated that the German bourgeoisie was too weak to act as their ally. French intelligence had also learned of the German offer of an armistice through high-level treachery before the Americans, and so Marshal Foch was able to prepare countermeasures in peace.

When the Germans sifted through the French secret files in 1940, they found evidence of the betrayal, but the name of the person remained unknown. It must have been a key German personality!

The German offer of an armistice was followed by a lengthy exchange of notes between Berlin and Washington until the armistice of November 11, 1918.

In the course of this, it quickly became apparent that the U.S. president was beginning to back away from his own "Fourteen Points". The German side had allowed itself to be fooled. Because they wanted to be fooled?

Fearing an upheaval after the surprise request for an armistice, the OHL had already secretly withdrawn the "Sturmataillon Rohr" from the front on October 15, 1918, and stationed it in Spa, Belgium, to protect the army headquarters and the emperor. The "Sturmataillon Rohr" was considered the best and most loyal unit of the army and especially devoted to the crown prince. This shows how uncertain the situation behind the German front was already assessed by the highest authorities.

By the time General Ludendorff and Field Marshal Hindenburg were summoned to the "Great Meeting" on October 17, 1918, to hear how long the army could resist an Allied breakthrough, Ludendorff had regained his composure.

He hoped the Western Front could hold its own; he would not guarantee anything. The Entente alliance had also been unlucky. It could have achieved a strategic breakthrough, but the Entente battle front had not shown itself to be at the same level as before. Its chance was preserved, however, as the mood in the German army deteriorated: "These armistice negotiations have very nasty consequences." The troops are becoming lonely: "I miss from home the sentiment that the soldier far away in Belgium is defending German soil. I can only repeat the request: 'Grab the people. Pull it up!'" Ludendorff wanted to fight on, he swore to "fight to the utmost".

With its third note of October 23, 1918, the U.S. government even interfered with German sovereign rights and demanded nothing more than an unconditional surrender and a different constitution for Germany. This no longer had anything to do with the original idea of October 3 for an armistice.

Signed "Hindenburg, im Felde, am 24. Oktober, abends 10 Uhr", a telegram was sent "to all troops" with the message "that for us soldiers unacceptable US-President Wilson demands military surrender. Our enemies only used the word legal peace to deceive us and to break our resistance." The answer, he said, was to muster all combat forces. The front had to be held until the enemy gave up and showed a willingness to compromise.

Although it was now finally apparent that the worst fears of the opponents of the premature cease-fire offer had come true, Baden's cabinet, under the coaxing of Foreign Minister Solf, now clung to the lie of the negotiated peace.

Hindenburg had to revoke his orders under pressure from politicians and Foreign Ministry officials. By then, Hindenburg's orders had long since reached individual battalions at the front.

Documents from the Foreign Ministry show that they trickily outmaneuvered the OHL and not want to be swayed in slightest the peace capitulation policy once it had been adopted. Today, we would say that there was no alternative.

Prince Max again followed almost willy-nilly, although he had already recognized the possible dire consequences weeks before. Was his weakness based on blackmail because of his sexual inclinations, or was his flu illness to blame?

The modern German military technology of late 1918, which would have been almost without counterpart on the Allied side in the near future on land, sea, and air, did not play a major role either for Ludendorff or for his opponents.

What a contrast to the years 1944/45, when the leadership of the Third Reich placed its last hope in wonder weapons and subordinated everything to gaining time in order to still be able to use these revolutionary techniques!

In 1918, the German elites probably did not even know what was being developed on the drawing boards. Many probably also had no understanding whatsoever of the possibilities that could arise.

On the evening of October 25, Max asked the Kaiser for Ludendorff's recall. Now a strange event occurred: Max von Baden's telegram penetrated to the battalion level of the field army and caused indignation. Still, it was all of no use; Ludendorff was dismissed. It was out of the question for the new Reich leadership to resume fighting, despite the enemy's brutal demands for surrender.

Shortly before, the respected General Max von Gallwitz had refused to assume the role of "military dictator" offered to him after Ludendorff's departure, to depose Prince Max and to continue the war for the Kaiser and the Reich until a peace settlement was reached.

The prince, according to Berlin police officers belonging to the "class of men friends", was exposed to several relevant blackmail proceedings. Thus, the homosexual last chancellor of the German Empire will have been considered one of the weakest and most vulnerable persons to govern the

empire in this existential crisis. He was in power for only about 35 days. During this time, he issued the armistice request to Wilson just one day after taking office, although he thought it was wrong (who forced him to do it?).

He consistently prevented a renewed resumption of the war, even though Wilson's "Fourteen Points" had turned out to be a sham, and had Ludendorff dismissed.

Fig. 35 Prince Max of Baden (1867-1929), the last Chancellor of the German

Empire under Kaiser Wilhelm II. On November 9 he announced on his own authority that the Kaiser had abdicated and handed over his duties to the leader of the Social Democrats, Friedrich Ebert. Prince Max could have saved the monarchy, but as a homosexual he was susceptible to blackmail and did not dare openly oppose Wilhelm II and later the SPD, which is why he was also called the "gay gravedigger of the German

To please Wilson, "Baden-Max" ended the Hohenzollern monarchy with a telephone call without the emperor's consent and handed over his official duties to SPD leader Friedrich Ebert. A kind of "cold coup d'état".

But even after Ludendorff's replacement, leading generals such as von Gallwitz still recommended to the new government on October 28 that it hold out over the winter because it would then surely be possible to achieve a peace settlement:

If the enemy sees that we will not be defeated, we will get a better peace. [...] The diplomatic threads can quietly be spun on. However, they would not have to be allowed to influence the army as publicly as before.

The enemy's increase in strength had been cancelled out by the fighting. The fighting strength of the French had decreased considerably. In addition, peace currents in the opposing countries made themselves strongly felt.

Max von Baden's government was not impressed even by the loyal General von Gallwitz.

Although Wilson's "Fourteen Points" had already proved to be a mendacious propaganda ploy with his second note, German planes dropped flyers over the British and American trenches in the second half of October 1918 saying that Germany was ready for peace because of Wilson's guarantee of an armistice. There was no such guarantee! The propagandists around Kahn and Lippmann must have held their bellies laughing at such simplicity.

Here, the new Secretary of State Matthias Erzberger played a very

ominous role for the continued existence of the Second Reich. Since the summer of 1917, he had been regarded by General Ludendorff as a leading supporter of defeatism. Even then, Erzberger emphasized the "non-effectiveness" of submarine warfare, although written documents from him stated that a success of the German submarines could probably occur in 1919 or 1920.

This man, who until then had been very controversial in the old empire, usurped the leadership of the German armistice delegation at the end of October 1918. He had recommended appearing as guilty as possible in the forest of Compiègne, submissively signing everything, begging for forgiveness and appealing to the morale of the opponents.

It was thus easy for the Allies to mercilessly push through their demands with such negotiating strategists. Later, they tried to excuse Erzberger's disastrous negotiating tactics by saying that his only son, who had just been drafted into the army, had died of Spanish flu in a Karlsruhe hospital before the negotiations.

In Versailles a few months later, however, Erzberger campaigned just as passionately for the acceptance of the Allied peace dictate and, as finance minister of the Weimar Republic, made a point of scrupulously complying with the oppressive reparation demands. In the end, he was so hated in wide circles that members of the "Organization Consul" assassinated him in 1921.

To lull the Germans into a false sense of security and induce them to surrender their weapons, Wilson followed up with another note on November 5, 1918:

The Allied and Associated Powers ... declare their readiness to conclude peace with the German Government on the basis of the peace conditions set forth in the President's address to Congress of January 8, 1918.

This proves that 4 days before the official armistice negotiations began, President Wilson once again promised Germany that he wanted to make peace on the basis of his "Fourteen Points". This was equivalent to a peace treaty under international law, lacking only the final form.

Deceit and deception everywhere you looked!

When revolution also broke out in Germany on November 6, the German

Empire's negotiating position had deteriorated even further. This made it easy for the Entente to present its demands for the subjugation of Germany. Marshal Foch had also learned of this through treachery even before the German armistice delegation.

Now, General Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg also demanded that an armistice be concluded quickly in order to be able to put down the revolution in the Reich. In Beverloo, Belgium, this had just been achieved with the use of tanks and aircraft against insurgent naval troops. The core of the insurgents consisted of sailors from various ships of the High Seas Fleet who had been punished in Belgium for refusing orders and obedience.

It has never been properly investigated to what extent politicians like Erzberger and the representatives of the Foreign Office around Solf were really convinced of the seriousness of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" when, even before the outbreak of the revolution in the Reich, they fulfilled demand after demand of the Allies and pushed through the renunciation of the resumption of hostilities that had originally been firmly envisaged in the event of a failure of the negotiations.

Was this an act of treason in favor of the opponents, or did they know about the planned revolution?

Fig. 36 German cartoon from 1918: U.S. President Woodrow
sings a song of friendship to the German people, but

pipes of the American organ are made of the cannons sold the Allies
spirit of the U.S. crusade for
"democracy" and "perpetual peace" was also inherent in Wilson's "Fourteen
Points
Significantly on September 27, 1918, two days before Ludendorff called
on Reichstag
begin armistice
Wilson, the U.S. president remarked,
"Germany keeps hinting at the terms she would be willing to accept
but she keeps learning that the world does not want peace terms

"

In fact, there are some conspicuous features in connection with the German
cease-fire request to U.S. President Wilson give pause for thought

Warnings of the unrelenting fact of the Allied enemy powers' undiminished will to annihilate continued to abound from Department III b (Military Intelligence) in the summer of 1918, and the possible repercussions of an offer of an armistice on the seething mood in the empire and the growing danger of revolution were also reported upward, but not considered in the upcoming decisions.

The question is whether the responsible circles at the State Department and the top military leadership actually believed in the realization of Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Thus, Major General Paul von Bartenwerffer, head of the OHL's Political Department, gave intelligence chief Colonel Walter Nicolai a picture of the expected hostile peace terms only a few days after the German armistice offer was transmitted to the Americans (October 7, 1918), which roughly corresponded to later realities. Nicolai was shocked because von Bartenwerffer at the same time showed no will to resist. Such an attitude was in stark contrast to Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who wanted to keep fighting if the Allies tried to exploit the armistice offer to subjugate Germany.

In his notes, which were kept hidden in Moscow's secret archives for decades, the intelligence chief also criticized the OHL officers Colonel Hans Maximilian Gustav von Haeften, Colonel Hans-Wolfgang Herwarth von Bittenfeld and Major Joachim von Stülpnagel in this context.

Long before that, the colonel, who is still shrouded in secrecy today, had been asked to attend a meeting on September 22, 1917, at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin to discuss the reconnaissance of the troops. Nicolai's department was to arrange that a peace of renunciation be made palatable to the army. However, he held out the prospect of a refusal because this was not a subject for reviving the fighting strength of the troops. After the war, General Ludendorff once described this period as the beginning of the "revolution against the army".

According to Nicolai, Ludendorff also broke in August 1918 because the two-front war against East and West, to which Ludendorff felt he had grown, had become a two-front war against an external and internal enemy. Ludendorff's refusal to fight it was based on his "soldierly feeling," according to which it seemed incomprehensible how the people could rise up against their own army and that there was not a man at home to prevent it.

When Hitler then took power in 1933, it was clear to Ludendorff, even before the outward form of the new power had been established, that a new war was inevitable. He therefore warned Nicolai:

If you live to see it, and if you have influence, make sure that the people do not rise up against the army again and crush its leadership.

It was not to come to that, because Nicolai was categorically rejected as a collaborator by Hitler's chief of defense, Admiral Canaris. They probably did not want to let their predecessor show their cards in their own activities, which were definitely hostile to the regime.

In the summer of 1918, apparently nothing remained secret among the German leadership. Already one day after the decision on the armistice offer in the Great Headquarters on September 29, 1918, details of the decision had reached politics and the press in Berlin through the betrayal of a revolutionary telegraph secretary in the GrHQu (Great Headquarters).

In order to make the armistice offer of October 3, 1918, appear to have no alternative, people in high German circles also resorted to lies and forgery, as Field Marshal von Hindenburg had to state indignantly on October 20, 1918. Hindenburg telegraphed to the new Reich Chancellor Max von Baden: His name was being misused to create a completely desperate mood. He was said to have made statements to the effect that we could no longer offer any resistance, that we could no longer hold the army together, that the deadline counted only hours, and so on. All these statements were recklessly invented. Anyone who passed them on in his or Ludendorff's name was aiding and abetting the enemy.

It has never become known which people at the OHL were behind these lies. To this day, their invented statements are readily used in historiography as evidence of the alleged hopelessness of further German resistance against the Allies in the fall of 1918.

Some of the leading German officials must have known that U.S. President Wilson was nothing more than a compliant lobbyist for Wall Street banks, but especially for J. P Morgan.

As early as 1912, the moneyed aristocracy had provided Wilson's campaign headquarters; more than two-thirds of his campaign funds came directly from Wall Street financiers.

To be on the safe side, Wilson had made sure that Edward Mandell House, the bankers' confidant and a convinced enemy of Germany, was placed at his side as a gray eminence. "Colonel House controlled Wilson's every move, so that the power of government in America fell step by step into the hands of the investment bankers around J. P. Morgan.

For these people, a peace between Germany and the Allies, which was quite possible in 1918, would have been tantamount to their own ruin.

In this case, each participant in the war would have had to pay its own debts. The problem was, as the German shipowner Albert Ballin correctly pointed out, that the German people owed most of their debts to themselves, while England would have an enormous debt to pay off to America.

In this case, Germany would have been economically weakened, but England would have been bankrupt and the American economy would have been in a depression; not to mention that Germany would have retained its leading position in Europe, which the Anglo-American elite hated. That was exactly the point! They wanted to rule undisturbed and do business.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger confirmed in the November 13, 1994, *Welt am Sonntag*:

Ultimately, two world wars were fought to prevent Germany from playing a dominant role.

In this respect, the thesis is not without justification that the "Fourteen-Point Program" of U.S. President Wilson was initially a futile attempt to thwart peace between Russia and Germany/Austria. Later, not without the help of German industrialists, politicians, officers and officials, it became probably the most successful stratagem since the Trojan Horse.

That Wilson's Fourteen Points generally could not have been sincerely meant is shown by the fact that they were not enforced for affected peoples in the Allied sphere of power, such as the Irish or Indians.

In fact, the independence of nations in Wilson's program was nothing more than a means to eliminate the empires. Thus, at the end of the war, Germans in Upper Silesia, West Prussia, and Posen were annexed to the Poles. Germans from the Sudetenland and Slovaks were forced into Czechoslovakia. Austrians from South Tyrol joined Italy; Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Bosnians had to form the new multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia with Serbia. In reality, instead of a noble future, an unprecedented amount of reasons for new hatreds and conflicts were to be generated in this way.

The effects extend into the 21st century. Of course, the German leadership in October 1918 did not foresee these ominous developments and

hoped that the new "Trojan Horse 2.0" called "Fourteen Points" would, unlike Homer's historical bringer of doom, bring a just peace to the empire. As once in Troy, the misguided crowd and its closest leaders did not heed the warnings and had to pay the price for their fatal error.

In the end, the outbreak of revolution in Germany became the nail in the coffin of all further military resistance hopes.

After 4 years of war, a revolution took place in Germany, forcing the country to surrender. Russian politician and publicist Nikolai Starikov wrote about this:

So why did the revolution take place? Because it was triggered. The same forces that brought down the Russian Empire in February and October (1917) were now ready to bury the second geopolitical rival - Kaiser Wilhelm's Empire, and bury it they did!

Germany had definitely handed itself over to its wartime enemies of its own accord, without being forced to do so militarily. And these had quite own problems, as we will see!

Wilson's "Fourteen Points" can thus be compared with the millennia-old story of the Trojan Horse from Homer's world-famous epic. The deceptive actions would have failed in both cases if the intended victims had not themselves made a breach in their hitherto unconquered fortresses to let the enemy in.

It was not so much the tense military situation in 1918 but, in the words of English historian Niall Ferguson, the "endogenous factor" that brought Germany down.

In 1919, Field Marshal von Hindenburg spoke of a "stab in the back of the fighting front" before the Reichstag's investigative committee.

Influential German bourgeois forces, such as the former president of AEG and leading armaments manager Walther Rathenau, also made statements after the war that suggest that some things may not have been right in the rapid demise of the Kaiserreich.

Rathenau wrote about this in his 1919 book *Der Kaiser (The Emperor)* about Kaiser Wilhelm II, who had considered him a good friend during the war:

The moment will never come when the emperor, as the victor of the world, passes through the Brandenburg Gate on white horses with his paladins. On that day, world history would have lost its meaning.

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Fig. 37 Quotation from the book *Der Kaiser* published by Walther Rathenau in 1919.
 here to a conversation between him and Bernhard
 Prince von BülowLudendorfflaterRathenauof defeatismbecause of this
 passage
 parts of the German elite secretly
 against the Second Reich?

There was more at stake here, for elsewhere Rathenau confessed:

This epoch was not only a German, but an alloccidental one. In Germany, however, it was a betrayal of the spirit and the past, and in Germany it rose to the summit. In Germany it had to be broken. [...] But in order to strike this German epoch to the heart, the most visible, the most doubtless, the greatest and exemplary thing had to happen in the name of history.

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Fig. 38 "... as an obstacle to progress, Germany's epoch had to be broken
 "This was not written by an Entente politician, but by Walther
 Rathenau, leading German armaments manager and former
 "friend" of Wilhelm II in 1919

The defeat of Germany? A member of the secret elite of the Allies could
 hardly have expressed this better.

General Ludendorff commented on Rathenau's book in 1919 before the
 Committee of Inquiry of the Reichstag:

So there were currents among the people that did not hold the view of the
 Supreme Army Command that we had to fight to win, and we had to take
 these currents into account.

Walther Rathenau, later foreign minister of the Weimar Republic, was shot
 by assassins on June 24, 1922, because he had failed as head of Germany's
 raw materials supply during World War I and had decisively damaged
 Germany after the war as the main proponent of the "Versailles fulfillment
 policy."

There may have been other influences in 1918: In 2015, while
 researching a new book in the Vatican's secret archives, author Michael
 Hesemann discovered a startling document in the files of the Munich
 nunciature.

This is a handwritten letter from the then Archbishop of Cologne, Felix

Cardinal von Hartmann, to the Apostolic Nuncio in Munich, Archbishop Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, dated November 8, 1918. Cardinal von Hartmann, who came from an old family of civil servants, was a personal friend of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. The Archbishop wrote:

His Majesty the Emperor has just informed me that, according to the news he received yesterday, the Greater Orient has decided first to depose all sovereigns, first and foremost him, the Emperor, then to destroy the Catholic Church, intern the Pope, etc., and finally to establish a world republic under the leadership of American big business on the ruins of hitherto bourgeois society. Then to destroy the Catholic Church (?), to intern the Pope, etc., and finally to set up a world republic under the leadership of American big business on the ruins of the previous bourgeois society. The German Freemasons would be loyal to the Emperor (which is very doubtful!) and would have let him know that.
[...]

I have felt obliged to bring this to your Excellency's attention, and must leave it to your wise discretion whether you wish to pass on the communication to Rome. The stormy demand of the Social Democrats that the Emperor should abdicate gives some confirmation to the news.

Did Freemasons actively work to bring about the rapid demise of the Second Reich, and were there lodge brothers at the Foreign Office or the OHL? Although there is evidence that senior Masons were involved in the American and French Revolutions and in the Italian independence movement, any account of their role in shaping history is quickly relegated to the realm of conspiracy theories. Even open declarations of war against the Pope and the Church are readily put into perspective.

In any case, the deposition of the emperor was successful.

Creeping Dangers of Death: The Two Diseases of the Empire

If Germany was a match for its opponents in terms of weaponry at the end of 1918 and its war-fighting capability did not appear to be in jeopardy, there must have been other reasons for Germany's rapid defeat.

Ludendorff's burnout was not the only illness that shook the Second Reich. The further 1918 progressed, the more a physical and a mental poison began to systemically infect the empire, which had a more fatal effect than the heavy losses in the major battles.

The physical poison was influenza - the "Kimmel's disease" - as it was first called by the troops fighting in Flanders.

At that time, it was believed that this "Spanish disease" had been taken over from the camps abandoned by the British during the great spring offensive. In the malnourished bodies of the German front-line soldiers, exhausted to the utmost by the fighting, influenza could spread particularly easily.

Entire companies were completely incapacitated, and entire divisions, such as the 10th Replacement Division, had to be relieved in order to regain some degree of health in rest camps.

The new illness tore alarming gaps that could not be fully filled, because the German replacements from home left more and more to be desired morally and in numbers.

Fig. 39 People suffering from Spanish flu in an emergency
Kansas, USA, in 1918. In the course of their successful
spring offensive in March 1918, many
, French and American soldiers who had already

infected prisoner epidemic soon spread among the German soldiers at the
front
. Estimates put the number of infected persons at up to 500,000. When
sick were sent

, they brought the pathogens with them to Germany

In fact, the new disease had apparently reached France and England via the Atlantic on U.S. troop transports. In early April 1918, influenza cases are attested in the French port city of Brest, which quickly spread in concentric circles among both the civilian population and the soldiers. By the end of April, the epidemic was already holding British, American, French, and especially German troops at bay.

Erich von Ludendorff later complained in his memoirs that influenza, or "Flanders fever," as the Germans first called the flu illness, threw off his battle plans. This, von Ludendorff said, weakened his men and caused their fighting morale to drop. It had contributed some to the failure of his offensives. In fact, the Germans were not the only ones whose operations were affected by the flu.

Thus, in May 1918, the British fleet could not set sail for 2 weeks because a total of 10313 men were sick. This would have been the opportunity for Germany's High Seas Fleet to destroy the Allied naval blockade - if one had learned of the Royal Navy's problem. One supposedly did not!

The flu then retreated again, and when summer came, even the countries that had been hit hardest were granted a kind of reprieve. The epidemic seemed to have disappeared without a trace.

But when she returned a few months later, she had become a monstrous killer that no longer bore much resemblance to what was commonly understood as "influenza."

Research in the 21st century then proved that the "Spanish flu" was not Spanish in nature at all, but had been produced in the U.S. by an early bioweapons program.

It was one of the most successful bioweapons produced to date. From 1918 to 1920, it killed between 25 and 50 million people. F. William Engdahl wrote:

The "Spanish flu" got out of control as a bioweapon and turned on its inventors as much as it did on its intended German enemies.

The only problem for Germany was that it hit the country in the middle of its decisive offensive, weakening it considerably.

In addition, there was a second poisonous mental disease that would mean the death of any field army if it were not eradicated by the root at its first appearance. It was the "fluffiness" that arose from the general war weariness.

What had Germany achieved and suffered during these months and years of war? Romania eliminated, Russia defeated and forced to peace, Italy paralyzed.

But dark were also the clouds that bordered that radiant victory sun.

Deprivation went around Germany, accompanied by war weariness, indifference, discontent, and mutiny, the flare of which had shot up briefly but threateningly in July 1917 in the High Seas Fleet.

Dark forces were stirring within, beginning with flummery and aimed at conscientious objection.

The long duration of the war and the terrible blood sacrifices it demanded, as well as the privations to which women, children and the elderly in particular were exposed at home (for example, the Allied naval blockade), provided welcome fodder for the work of decomposition.

In January 1918, at least half a million workers went on strike in Berlin alone. The spirit of the army on the fronts was also no longer that of August 1914, for only a fraction of the old guard was still alive after so many murderous battles. The eternal trench warfare of the Western Front, with its many losses, had dulled the fighting spirit. The fighting men's resentment against shirkers and profiteers in the stage and war industry grew into foul, fierce hatred.

Despite all this, the German regiments had risen in several offensives from March to July 1918, repeatedly putting the Allies in the west in the greatest straits. Victory reports followed victory reports; the numbers of prisoners and booty increased to the point of the fantastic. Victory and with it the end of the terrible war seemed as good as certain. Emperor Wilhelm II rang the bells of the churches in the Reich, distributed champagne to those around him and gave the schoolchildren the day off from school.

Nevertheless, every German offensive ended without a breakthrough, despite gains in terrain. The Allies, who on several occasions had already wanted to clear the Channel ports and abandon Paris, could breathe a sigh of relief. The size of the tactical victory achieved by the Germans could not hide the operational failure. In addition, targeted Allied propaganda made the German people war-weary. Quite publicly, through speeches and in the press and literature, language was used against the government, against the "war-mongers" and "militarists" that seems unimaginable in the face of the struggling army.

Only with the greatest caution and restriction should we use the word "stab in the back". Certainly, there were channels to patriotic people to whom the Entente could supply the poison of betrayal and who eagerly absorbed this poison, deliberately spread it further and consciencelessly incited parts of the German workers to strike. In addition, there were high-ranking wire-pullers who, behind the back of the army, in continuation of their previous activities, worked with all means against a victory of the

German arms.

But it is essential to emphasize that by far the greatest mass of the German people, especially the working classes, possessed a firm will to persevere in the summer of 1918.

Here, however, Germany's elite made terrible mistakes: When Kaiser Wilhelm II gave a speech "full of saber rattling and fanfare" to the Krupp workforce at the end of August 1918, the result was jeers and riots. Only a short time before, the monarch had visited the Henschel factories and, instead of giving a speech similar to that at the Krupp factories, held serious, personal talks with the workers there on the advice of the friendly company boss to the war-weary and starving Henschelians. The result was enthusiastic cheers for the Kaiser!

It was the longing for peace that dominated the Germans, even the field army itself, more and more insatiably. The words "We can no longer!" burned the fate with ever firmer, no longer extinguishing features into the German national soul. The great German victories in March, April and May 1918 had only numbed this pain and would certainly have overcome it if they had been followed by a final success. But when Ludendorff's thoroughly prepared July offensive before Rheims was unsuccessful, the agony of longing for that peace at any price broke through all the more fiercely.

Certainly, all Germans were war-weary and longed for peace, but with one difference: the German front-line soldiers did so for idealistic reasons, because they wanted to be a strong, free people, worthy of the heavy sacrifices they had made. Those responsible at home, on the other hand, who pulled the strings, longed for the peace of materialism, justified by the deceptive hope of international equality, human dignity and brotherhood.

In their delusion they did not take into account one thing: the patriotism of the enemy peoples and the hatred against Germany bred by the lying war propaganda of the Anglo-Americans.

Thus the Germans, together with their empire, were irresistibly drawn into that dark abyss which had opened up beneath their feet.

How could a death-wracked body like the German Empire in the fall of 1918 still have harbored a life-strong soul?

The internal disease that had afflicted Germany was too severe, and there was no longer any remedy for it after Prince Max of Baden's request for peace on October 4, 1918.

The emperor, the government and the authorities appeared weak and indecisive. Although the police and intelligence services had informed them of the imminent danger, they could no longer muster the courage to offer serious resistance to the red tide that was breaking in everywhere and to the political arsonists.

But that the German people, after the obvious failure of its aristocratic elite, believed to find its remedy in a revolution was the most terrible and tragic error imaginable. For this revolution of November 1918, Germany finally surrendered herself to her implacable adversaries. That they were implacable should have been clear from their unscrupulous inflammatory

propaganda!

Weapons and defenses were thrown down from the outset, so that the enemy had an easy game. The defensive measures against the psychological warfare of the opponents were completely inadequate.

The Germans were able to fight battles with open sights, to string together victories and to astonish the whole world, but in the field of mental wrestling against dark forces of propaganda and decomposition, the leaders of the German elite remained pure fools or useful idiots who conceded noble motives to the enemy until the end.

English propaganda explained to the German people that the war was directed only against the Kaiser and the militarism he embodied, but never against the dear Germans themselves. In this context, Sir Campbell Stuart, one of the leading English propagandists of the World War, wrote in his 1922 work *Secrets from Crewe House*:

The English propaganda must make it clear that nothing stands between the hostile peoples and lasting peace but the predatory intentions of their dynasty with the military and economic caste. They had to persuade the German people that it is not the intention of the Allies to destroy any people, but to secure the freedom of all on the basis of self-determination to be exercised under final assurance of justice and honest play, that only if they accepted the Allies' conception of a world settlement would it be possible for the enemy peoples to repair the damage suffered as a result of the present war, to avert terrible financial ruin and to save themselves from endless misery.

Thus, a turnaround of Germany was not only in the interest of the Allies, but also in the interest of the German people themselves (!) the very first war goal of the Allies.

Germany, therefore, had the choice between her own permanent ruin by remaining with her present system of government and policy, and the prospect of political and economic salvation by overturning her military system so that she would then be in a position sincerely to conform to the Allied plan of world organization.

General Ludendorff was one of the few German leaders of the world war who recognized the danger and saw through the tactics of the English. How

correctly the opponents had assessed the mental state of the German people after the summer of 1918, the 9th of November 1918 did not owe them the proof!

Global war fatigue and morale problems

From late 1917, it became increasingly clear to all belligerents that neither land forces, nor naval forces, nor economic strategies of destruction could bring the war to a quick end.

It was not only in Germany, therefore, that the home front wobbled, where people had had enough of losses and privations that seemed to lead only to the enrichment of industrialists, mine owners and financial sharks. In England, too, the unions became increasingly assertive and aggressive, with a first peak in the spring and summer of 1917. Strikes and demonstrations spread to munitions factories and other industries in Scotland, London, Wales and the Midlands.

With concessions and increased propaganda, the British government managed to put the lid on the seething pot. But the unrest remained!

Fearing that a workers' uprising similar to the one in Russia would be triggered and in order not to risk the throne of King George V, the monarch and His Majesty's government decided to withdraw the offer of asylum to the ousted Russian Tsar Nicholas II, which had already been initiated - thus leaving the surprised Tsar and his family to a cruel death in Yekaterinburg.

Fig. 41 Germany at home, 1917. War fatigue, social hardship, mass strikes spread. Here, a line of people in front of a grocery store in a small German town. After the devastating "turnip winter" of 1916/17, several hunger

Nevertheless, in 1918 the number of strikes in England increased again: from 730 in 1917 to 1165. A disruption of the Great Western Railways from September 24 to 26, 1918, could only be ended by the deployment of six battalions of soldiers with cavalry.

The militancy of the demonstrations and strikes increased steadily. Airmen even dropped government leaflets over striking aircraft plants.

If the war had continued, Lloyd George's government would have been faced with the choice of intervening with state coercion, which would have been risky because of a severely depleted and unreliable police force.

In addition to domestic unrest, England would have faced a grim winter of 1918/19 with fuel, coal and food shortages - a dangerous combination that proved to be the nail in the coffin of the Kaiserreich in Germany. The armistice saved the day in England!

In France, the patriotic "spirit of Verdun" had already completely disappeared by 1917: Not only did the army mutiny, the "truce" that had prevailed since August 1914 gave way to increasing mass strikes.

The workers could only be persuaded to furl their red flags again with massive concessions and wage increases. France's unrest was held in check only with difficulty by the energetic Georges Clemenceau. Clemenceau's government moved four cavalry divisions to the rear as a safeguard, improved police surveillance and suppressed strikes.

Fig. 42 Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) He began his second political
at the age of 76! In November 1917, when the French
army was in deep crisis and mass strikes were raging in France
, he was again appointed prime minister and minister of
By publishing the Sixtus Letters
he drove a wedge between the Central Powers and Austria-Hungary

In the summer of 1918, he himself had former Interior Minister Louis-Jean
Malvy tried for treason. Malvy was acquitted of the charge, but for not
suppressing "defeatist publications" he was expelled from the country for 5
years.

Clemenceau established a kind of dictatorship in France on the premise
that - whatever the cost! - victory would go to the side that believed it could
hold out a quarter of an hour longer than its opponent. It can be taken for
granted that if the war had continued into 1919, Clemenceau, too, would
have had to deal with a strong resurgence of trade union unrest and a much
stronger anti-war opposition. All European peoples had had enough of the
senseless slaughter!

CHAPTER 6

The "inner front" collapses

It took only 5 weeks to destroy Prince Bismarck's life's work.

Could the High Seas Fleet have saved Germany from surrender at the end of October 1918?

In 1914-1918, Germany had the second most powerful ocean-going fleet in the world after the Royal Navy. It was considered the pride of the Kaiser, but in the fall of 1918 it became the spark for the sudden downfall of the Second Reich. Contrary to expectations, the capital ships of all powers were used against each other only to a small extent during the First World War.

On May 31, 1916, the largest of these clashes, in the Battle of Skagerrak, had ended with a partial German victory. But this was purely tactical and did not fundamentally change the Empire's poor strategic naval position.

The German High Seas Fleet had been specially prepared in years of peacetime training for a decisive battle against the Royal Navy (also called "the day" in naval circles). There was reason to do so, since the earlier British operational planning had consisted of a tight blockade of the German Bight. Under such circumstances, the battle was bound to happen.

The construction design of the German ships was inextricably linked to these enemy intentions. The primary concern was stability, which was achieved. The combination of thick armor, good space allocation, wide hull frames, good drainage, and effective damage control equipment helped produce ships that were virtually unsinkable. The armament was fully capable of destroying the enemy, and year after year the German naval guns proved themselves a match for the guns of the enemy, although they were somewhat weaker in caliber.

None of the German imperial "dreadnought" battleships had been sunk by enemy guns, mines, torpedoes or bombs during the war.

Disadvantages of the German ships of the line were their relatively small range and the cramped space available for crew accommodation compared to the British navy. This made longer stays at sea difficult, but was consistent with the planned mission of closer North Sea defense.

Around the year 1912, the old German conception was unhinged. The English, at the suggestion of Winston Churchill, switched from a narrow blockade to the plan of a long-distance blockade. Thus, the entire North Sea

was blockaded. Decisive battles in the North Sea thus became unlikely.

Inconceivably, German operational planning did not take the new known situation into account until the outbreak of war. The German Admiral's Staff was still gripped by the thought that the British fleet would advance into the German Bight to defeat the German fleet, despite the long-range blockade it was to conduct.

After the unsatisfactory outcome for them of the Battle of Skagerrak on May 31, 1916, the leadership of the British High Sea Fleet no longer had confidence or resolve to meet the German battle fleet in a direct confrontation.

In the Royal Navy, the macabre remark went around that the English naval chief was the only man in the world who could lose a world war in one afternoon. As a consequence, the British admirals agreed to leave most of the North Sea to the German Navy.

Instead, every effort was made to mine as much of the North Sea as possible in order to at least restrict the movement of the German High Seas Fleet and the even more threatening U-boats.

The presence of the High Seas Fleet, however, allowed the German submarines almost carefree passage through the North Sea and protection of the German minesweeping flotillas, which became increasingly vital to Germany as the war progressed. A clear victory for the German battle fleet without firing a single shot!

However, because of the unfavorable geographic position of the German sphere of influence, it was clear that even the most successful battle against the English fleet could not end the Royal Navy's long-range blockade. For Germany, England's geostrategic position meant that the Royal Navy would be able to maintain its blockade even with the very weakest naval forces.

In addition, Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted "his" fleet to risk as little as possible if an enemy superiority had to be expected. In principle, this was always the case!

Thus, Germany's best ships lay idle in their harbors for most of the war, rusting away.

The same was true of the British High Seas Fleet, which had to wait in its naval bases for the enemy to appear at any time.

The necessary presence of such a large number of modern warships close to home had the strategic consequence that England could only divert old battleships for the fight in the Mediterranean. The bloody failure of the Anglo-French invasion of Gallipoli was then also a consequence of the lack of modern Allied battleships.

Admiral David Beatty even reported in 1918 that, in view of the heavy use of English naval forces by the anti-submarine defense, he could no longer guarantee that he would be able to face the German fleet on an equal footing. The initiation of a new naval battle was no longer desirable.

A new move was therefore considered, and so if the war continued, the British planned a surprise attack with aircraft carriers and Sopwith "Cuckoo" torpedo bombers on the High Seas Fleet.

A deployment of 100 torpedo bombers was expected to eliminate a third of the German high seas fleet. That most of the "Cuckoos" would not come back was considered acceptable.

Overall, even after the Battle of Skagerrak, the German battleships proved perfectly capable of carrying out all the actions for which they were designed.

In August and October 1916, Admiral Scheer carried out offensive advances without hesitation, and it was only a quirk of fate that there was no renewed major naval battle between the Germans and the British on August 19, 1916. A bold offensive mission was planned for early 1917, but was then abandoned.

In October 1917, the German battleships set sail for "Operation Albion". In the process, they succeeded in capturing the Baltic islands from Russia, which greatly accelerated Russia's withdrawal from the First World War.

Further undertakings had proved that the numerical superiority of the British Home Fleet could be offset with skilful German leadership. Thus the area around the Skagerrak, still the scene of the great naval battle between the British and Germans in 1916, became a sea area in which the Kaiserliche Marine sailed around at will in 1918.

In fact, the extraordinary importance of the Battle of Skagerrak for the progress of World War I is underestimated. The blockade against Germany continued, but the Western powers lost the possibility of contact with Russia

via the Baltic Sea. The supply of ore from Sweden, which was indispensable for German warfare, also remained secure.

As a result of the Skagerrak Battle, England had lost the unique world supremacy of its fleet, which had been undisputed since Trafalgar, and never regained it after the war.

In October 1917, the British and German fleets off the central English coast had again escaped a collision only by chance.

In April 1918, Admiral Scheer had led his ships all the way up to Bergen in line with the Shetland Islands without the British succeeding in preventing the High Seas Fleet from returning to the German Bight.

But even then there were warning signs! For example, the sailors on board had only been told after the German fleet had left that they were on a mission and not just on a training voyage. So the widespread bad mood and insubordination among the crews were well known!

The purpose of the April 1918 mission was to temporarily lift the British blockade and disrupt Allied convoy traffic between Norway and England. A possible German naval victory would have given additional impetus to the army in the "Kaiser's Battle" in France and could have prompted the British to evacuate France, which had already been contemplated.

However, the hopeful mission had to be abandoned prematurely due to a bad accident of the new battle cruiser "Moltke", which could be brought home with difficulty.

Only 185 nautical miles separated the two battle fleets at that time before the second major battle in the North Sea. The Allied convoys seemed to be forewarned, so that no merchant ship could be captured by the High Seas Fleet.

With their small cruising range and cramped crew accommodations, it was impossible for the German High Seas Fleet to fight an effective supply war in the North Atlantic, as the German surface capital ships did successfully for years later in World War II. Better accommodations were available on the battle cruisers.

In view of the experience of World War II, one can well imagine today the consequences that would have resulted from the short-term appearance of two or three German battle cruisers in the North Atlantic during the

summer months of 1918, when American troop transports carrying 200,000 men a month plowed across the North Atlantic in fast steamers largely commandeered by the Germans.

With her large cruising range, this would have been nothing impossible for the newer German battle cruisers. The "SMS Hindenburg" was to carry two Gotha WD.11 series twin-engine long-range reconnaissance seaplanes sideways behind the second funnel for such missions.

A single sighting would have been enough to hold back the Allied troop transports in the American ports of departure, possibly for weeks. This certainly could have had a significant impact on the continental battlefield in the fateful fall of 1918. Why the serious proposals for the use of battle cruisers in the supply war in 1918 were not realized is one of the mysteries of World War I.

At that time, the Imperial Admiral's Staff did not make use of the possibility of strategic interaction with the Army - this type of warfare was not familiar to it, given its conservative thinking.

Then came a fateful event: at the end of the war, the German Admiral Staff had once again wanted to fall back on its original planning for a decisive battle in the North Sea.

The German naval command must have suspected at the time that the offer of armistice made by the new Reich Chancellor Prince Max von Baden to the American President Wilson on October 4, 1918, would not be successful in the form desired by the Empire.

Vice Admiral Adolf von Trotha, Chief of Staff of the Naval War Directorate, therefore began to consider as early as October 6, 1918, how the fleet command should behave in the future after the cessation of submarine warfare, which was planned by German policy as an advance payment to the Allies. Von Trotha, with the agreement of Admiral Hipper and Admiral Scheer, had come to the conclusion that the German High Seas Fleet would have to be used "if ... serious damage to British naval power promises more advantages for us than the continuation of submarine warfare."

This became possible as soon as the High Seas Fleet, as an intact fighting instrument, was freed up for other enterprises after the abandonment of submarine warfare.

In fact, a fleet advance during future armistice negotiations had already been discussed in naval officer circles as an operational goal throughout the war. It was therefore not the hare-brained idea of naval officers fearing for their honor, as it is interpreted by politically correct historians to this day.

On October 16, 1918, a note from U.S. President Wilson shattered all illusions of the German leadership, including the Kaiser.

As early as October 24, 1918, when the Supreme Army Command was still toying with the idea of breaking off the armistice negotiations with the Allies, an Admiralty order was conceived, based on von Trotha's deliberations of early October 1918.

The enterprise that was to become the fate of the empire went under the name "Operationsbefehl 19".

The entire German battle fleet, i.e. three battleship squadrons and three reconnaissance squadrons, were concentrated off Wilhelmshaven at Schillig Reede.

On 27 October, Admiral Scheer approved von Trotha's draft orders. The unit chiefs were summoned to the fleet commander's flagship at 8 p.m. on 29 October. There they were to be briefed on the advance scheduled for the next day.

However, the secret had not been kept. Some highly placed personalities were quite interested in preventing the mission. Since October 25, rumors had been circulating about a planned major naval battle in which the entire German fleet was to be sent to its doom in order to save the honor of the empire.

Obviously, there was also betrayal among those charged with issuing orders. The sailors on the ships used flashlight signals to communicate with each other, and as early as October 27, the first "Blue Boys" did not return to duty. From October 29, 1918, the unrest on the ships of the German High Seas Fleet spread to an uprising and even open mutiny.

The German officers on the affected ships did not dare to intervene, as they were aware of the fate of their Russian comrades in the revolution.

Some brave ones talked to the insurgents to find out why they refused to obey. Here they received almost from all the same answer, which can be summarized in sentences like: "We have no more confidence in the

officers ... They want to sacrifice the fleet. Now that peace is at the door, we don't want to go to the dogs ... The new government is being deceived by officers because it knows nothing about the planned enterprise."

This shows that parts of the new government may have interfered here to put the brakes on the planned fleet advance. On October 20, Admiral Scheer had mentioned to Prince Max that the fleet had regained its operational freedom since the end of the U-boat war, but the intention to deploy was kept secret from him.

The order to Admiral Hipper to bring the ships together on the same day was given verbally. On the ships, at first, nothing at all sounded like revolution, class struggle and world satisfaction. Some superiors were already breathing a sigh of relief.

Fig. 44 Carl Friedrich Heinrich Reinhard Scheer (1863-1928) became Chief of Staff of the newly founded Naval Warfare Directorate on August 11 1918. His submarine construction program called for threefold increase in submarine production by the third quarter of 1919. The armistice negotiations began in October 1918 put an end to these plans. Scheer then had all submarines recalled so as not to jeopardize the negotiations.

On October 30, therefore, a less risky version was discussed at a chiefs' meeting, in which the torpedo boats were to be deployed against the English east coast. The High Seas Fleet would have given them cover as far as the mine belt and the boats would have resumed inside the mine belt.

the process, the crews of the battle squadrons were to be deceived by the FT order to "sail for evolution."

But in the darkness, there were more problems with the mutineers, and some things pointed to a possible escalation when the fleet departed on October 31.

It had already been known since 1917 that troublemakers ran their regiment among the crew on ships of the High Seas Fleet. Poor food and the cramped life on board quickly found them support. Now it was taking revenge for the fact that no recreational and employment facilities had been established for the crews at the shore bases of the High Seas Fleet as in the Royal Navy.

Nor was it possible, as in the Royal Navy, to prevent the clash between the shipyard personnel, often revolutionary in both countries, and the sailors of the "waiting tall ships," frustrated and disgruntled by long inactivity. In addition, there was an incredible pride of place among the officers on the tall ships.

Fig. 45 Franz Ritter von Hipper (1863-1932) replaced Reinhard Scheer as head of the High Seas Fleet in August 1918. When in Kiel the sailors' revolt broke out, von Hipper appealed unsuccessfully to the sailors. A German advance planned for October 30, 1918, coast of Flanders and into the Thames estuary was abandoned at short notice. Von Hipper then resigned from his

A key factor here was that many of the Kaiserliche Marine's most capable officers and NCOs had long since signed on with submarines and torpedo boat flotillas, where gun smoke and action beckoned. These younger, energetic officers and enlisted men were replaced by often incompetent reservists and officers lacking motivation.

On the shore leave that followed due to inactivity in the harbor, the sailors encountered seditious slogans in the few pubs, which USPD (independent SPD) and Spartacus successfully spread in the factories from 1917. The overthrow of the ruling order was openly proclaimed. In addition, there were demonstrable international connections and large bribes from the Allies to encourage an uprising on the ships.

After Admiral Hipper rescinded the deployment order on October 30, 1918, he immediately drafted a call to all sailors in which he sought to aggressively restore the lost confidence in the plans of the High Seas Command.

He now planned a smaller advance by torpedo boats and submarines into the North Sea. The battle squadrons were to advance only as far as the mine belt to cover the venture, but at a meeting of squadron commanders held the following afternoon, several commanders already expressed doubts about whether the big ships would carry out the order to weigh anchor.

This was prevented when part of the crew of the liner "Thüringen" not only refused the order to weigh anchor, but also extinguished the fire under the boilers and damaged the anchor light engine. The ship was thus no longer ready to sail.

At midnight, Admiral Franz von Hipper therefore had to come to the bitter decision to cancel the operation. Silently, the heads of the federation left the battleship "Baden". Not all of them welcomed this decision. "Operations Order 19" now developed ever faster into the final nail in the coffin of the Kaiserreich.

Attempts were now being made to distribute liners among several locations to allow superiors to get their people back in hand. Another avoidable mistake. In fact, the plan for distribution was already in place before the riots.

There were misunderstandings, too many people were left ashore; unexpectedly, crew members were missing for embarkation.

On land, meanwhile, there was friction between outraged submarine and torpedo boat crews loyal to the Kaiser and revolting crews of the big ships, which went as far as exchanges of fire.

While the liner squadrons and coastal batteries quickly fell to the soldiers' councils one after the other like a house of cards falling down, the old liner "Schlesien", after letting all crew members sympathizing with the revolutionaries off the ship, left Kiel harbor on November 5 with the imperial flag on the mast, passing the entire III Squadron, which was already completely flagged in red. Threatening radio messages to turn back were ignored.

While anchoring in the Flensburg Fjord, the "Schlesien" took on board naval cadets from Mürwik, who took the place of the missing revolutionary sailors. At the same time, the commander of the Mürwik Naval School reported that the Soldiers' Council in Kiel had given the order to sink the old battleship by torpedo boats during the night.

For days the "Schlesien" hid in the Baltic Sea. It is doubtful whether the Soldiers' Council would have been able to muster a crew of revolting torpedo boatmen for such an act. From 1918 until the 1960s (that's how long the veterans of the time survived), there was then a bitter, controversial discussion about the chances of "Operationsbefehl 19".

Most historians on both sides conceded that the Imperial Navy's cancelled venture had a realistic chance of success or even spoke of a well-thought-out operational plan. Only a minority at the time called the fleet operation utopian and a suicidal act of madness to save the Navy's honor.

After all contemporary witnesses had died, it was no longer a problem for modern historiography to help the minority opinion to prevail. It claimed that the planned fleet deployment at the end of October 1918 had been a "clear act of madness.

The plan was for the entire German fleet to sail from Schillig-Reede before dawn so that it could set course westward out of sight of land by day.

Two forward fast groups were to lead the attack on the first night, three small cruisers and the second flotilla off the Flanders coast, other cruisers and torpedo boats off the Thames.

The bulk of the High Seas Fleet was to stand as a backbone in the Hoofden and withdraw to the heights of Terschelling during the second day of operations to receive the light forces there.

If the Grand Fleet came this far south at all, it was only here, 70 to 80 nautical miles from the mouth of the Ems River, that it could be engaged in combat with any chance of success, or even be damaged by night attacks from the German U-boat flotillas as they approached.

The bulk of the British fleet was in Scottish ports and, depending on the timing of the alert, could not reach the southern North Sea until later in the second day.

The German fleet commander could expect that the English advance would be detected (radio observers, airships, maritime reconnaissance planes and submarines) and would not proceed undisturbed.

Twenty-four U-boats were already off English ports or the likely approaches of the English Grand Fleet, with more on the way.

Seven airships were to reconnoiter; the sea area off Terschelling was to be covered by strong mine barriers to the north. Sea reconnaissance planes, R-

planes and giant flying boats had radio transmitters with a range of 150 miles and trailed antennas up to 80 meters long. The German admirals would have known exactly and in time about all steps of the English!

The daring part of the advance lay in the attack of the two fast groups to the Flanders coast and off the Thames. Here, too, a victory was to be expected in the opinion of Admiral Friedrich Ruge, later the first Inspector of the German Navy. Even a success of the light forces without a clash of the large fleets would have shown the army that it was not fighting alone and could have been of value in the political struggle for the armistice.

As early as October 16, 1918, the Germans had begun an increased mine search campaign in the North Sea to make the fleet advance possible. This was recognized by the British.

To this day, it is debated whether the British knew about the German advance in advance.

From the British official account, it appears that while the U-boat deployment and minesweeping activities had been recognized, the Admiralty was also convinced that the German fleet would not take any further action before the armistice in order to hold an important pawn in the negotiations.

The Grand Fleet was definitely not prepared to go into the southern North Sea.

However, on 23 October, Royal Navy destroyer flotillas were regrouped as a precaution to be prepared for any German advance. Also, on 23 October 1918, Admiral Beatty was officially warned that the situation in the North Sea was currently "abnormal".

Then on 29 October came the clear announcement to Beatty that the Germans intended to lure the British Home Fleet into a submarine trap to the south. It was suspected that the High Seas Fleet might come out from behind its own mine barricade only briefly, spark around for a few hours, and then disappear. People compared this operation to historic Dutch actions at Medway during the Rheda negotiations.

In any case, the Royal Navy was warned that something extraordinary might be coming, and now had two options: Withdraw Channel shipping and remain in port, or possibly intercept the High Seas Fleet on the way back.

This was exactly the kind of battle for which the German High Seas Fleet

had been trained before the outbreak of war.

An attempt can be made to take a realistic look at the further opportunities of the planned company with modern knowledge.

From 22 to 30 October 1918, 24 U-boats just available sailed from German ports. Six submarines were recalled from more distant positions in the North Sea.

Many more were on their way back from abandoned submarine warfare in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, but probably not in position in time. Of the total of thirty boats, two were sunk: "U-78" during the march out by the English submarine "G 52" and "UB 116" during the courageous penetration of the English naval base Scapa Flow on 28 October 1918.

It is noticeable that seven German submarines failed during the approach due to "accidents". These were "U 43", "U 67", "UB 86", "UB 87", "UB 98", "UB 118" and "UB 130".

It is likely that technical sabotage by shipyard personnel in the ports was already to blame here. There had been no comparable event during the entire war.

It is interesting to note that the mustering of the submarines was ordered before the actual operational order for the High Seas Fleet.

What chances of success the planned submarine trap would have had in weakening the advance of the British High Seas Fleet is still disputed today. Since the test never had to take place, the most that can be drawn on here is experience from the Second World War. In 1944, for example, before the Battle of the Philippines, American submarines succeeded in decimating the Japanese battle fleet, which had sailed over their blocking lines.

Compared to the situation in 1916, the situation of the German High Seas Fleet had improved. The battle cruiser "Hindenburg" had joined the fleet as well as the two sensational new battleships "Bayern" and "Baden". They already bore a resemblance to the later German super battleships "Bismarck" and "Tirpitz".

Compared with 1916, the barrel elevation of the ship's artillery pieces was improved. This eliminated the range advantage that the British Grand Fleet had still possessed in the Skagerrak battle. By 1918, German ships possessed longer-range and optically better rangefinders for fire control, such as Petravic's automatic firing and averaging systems. Also, the flak was

significantly reinforced by 8.8-cm guns and the T/18 anti-aircraft gun.

In addition, smaller, homogeneous divisions in terms of speed had been planned, which could also operate independently of the line. This was already a development reminiscent of the later American task force technique.

In fact, the German High Seas Fleet in 1918 proved to be of a much higher technical standard than in 1916 and capable of fighting at long range and at night.

However, at the same time there was a significant increase in the combat value of the British Grand Fleet: several 15-inch battleships, "Greenboy" tank shells and reinforcements from the American battleships, which, however, had a dubious combat value in terms of steadiness.

Certainly, Hipper's October 1918 plan was not a concept for sacrificing the German fleet for reasons of honor, but it was also no longer a great relief for the land front, for by the time the order to attack was given, the Germans had already evacuated Flanders.

What would have been promising in August or September 1918 in terms of holding the Flanders positions was now obsolete.

At the time of the (delayed) order to attack, the political leadership of the empire had also already refrained from resuming the land war. Possibly this was the reason for the attempted use of the battle fleet at the last moment, as will be explained below.

The view from 1918 is therefore interesting for assessing possible German chances of success.

At the time, a strength ratio of 2.5 to 1 (capital ships) was arrived at: 40 percent (success), 50 percent (inconclusive), and 10 percent (German defeat). These percentages suggested that a fleet deployment to improve the German bargaining base was rationally justified.

Today's experts consider it extremely unlikely that the German advance would have met the entire English fleet.

Admiral Scheer further believed that even after a lost naval battle, there would have been sufficient German capital ships available to provide cover for minesweepers or U-boats if unrestricted submarine warfare did resume.

However, the potential value of the enterprise quickly turned into the opposite: "Operations Order 19" became the final nail in the coffin of the

empire!

However, the collapse of the High Seas Fleet would probably have occurred even without Hipper's order to leave.

In Wilhelmshaven, where leaflets with subversive content had already been circulating among the sailors since March 1918, the following slogan was briefly issued at a secret meeting on October 26: "The fleet will no longer participate from November 5!"

A day later, it was already the case that crew members of a cruiser had to be forcibly brought on board before leaving the lock - a process that was repeated on two other cruisers.

In all probability, on the morning of the day designated for the departure of the high seas fleet, the revolutionary leadership's slogan to begin the revolt arrived on board by transport steamers.

The new slogan is now said to have been, "When orders come, weigh anchor and raise steam, then cold-shore all ships!" In fact, this is one of the proofs that it was a prepared movement and not a momentary upsurge of sailors fearing for their lives. The same pattern was followed on board all the ships, when the crew was in charge of the "cold".

The influence of the Allies was also involved. In 1918, for example, Sachse, a leading member of the "Central Committee of Revolutionary Sailors," reported that the revolutionary sailors had direct contacts with foreign countries. That the outbreak of the fleet mutiny was based on purely political grounds is also clear from the fact that the revolutionaries kept loyal sailors under the harshest terror. They were threatened with murder and manslaughter. Thus, workers and sailors shouted at the crew of the battle cruiser "Seydlitz": "We'll beat you royalist scoundrels to death!"

When an attempt was made on the liner "König", which was still in dock, to take down the Red Flag and raise the old Imperial War Flag again instead, this attempt cost the lives of four officers.

After the German High Seas Fleet disbanded, revolution quickly spread in the port cities. As early as November 1, the Red Flags went up in Brunsbüttel and Lübeck, on November 6 in Wilhelmshaven and Cuxhaven, and the same evening in Hamburg.

In fact, the fight against the mutiny then revealed a strange lack of energy, as well as a reluctance to take responsibility and a conspicuous lack of

action on the part of the authorities.

They let the disaster become a fact for the Reich. Thus, already on October 27, the submarine cruiser "U 135" under the command of Captain Lieutenant Johannes Spieß was ready with three torpedo boats to impose a punitive law with gun and torpedo on the most wildly mutinous ships "Thüringen" and "Helgoland", which in all probability would have averted the military collapse of the High Seas Fleet. The appearance of the big submarine and the three torpedo boats alone had been enough to turn the mutineers dictating the law into helpless people pleading for their lives. Captain Lieutenant Spieß reported:

From the front side windows of the "Thuringia" there was a loud roar of fear and frantic shouting; the mutineers had barricaded themselves there. From the portholes they waved white cloths and small Red Cross flags, which they had apparently taken from the ship's hospital.

When the insurgents "surrendered," the implementation of the strict measures ordered against them was abandoned by the authorities. Then, when the same people attempted their insurrection again on land in Kiel, there was again a failure to enforce order, law and the constitution in the midst of war.

Thus, when Admiral von Schröder, the iron leader of the Marine Corps, had wanted to travel to Kiel to take over the governorship, "one" had prevented him from doing so at the last second by detaching him. This could hardly have been a coincidence!

Also, young officers, engineers, deck officers, and submarine and torpedo boat sailors had volunteered to resist the revolt in Kiel on November 3, but were not given weapons and orders.

A few torpedo boat sailors and a single lieutenant nevertheless came to arms, stopped the revolutionary procession through Kiel with gunfire, and drove the train of thousands apart with only two volleys.

The revolt could have been ended again at this point before it could spread to the empire.

Instead, the lieutenant in the naval station was now to be arrested for firing. In a special order to the troops it was announced: "Shooting at the insurgents is forbidden!"

In addition, there was an incomprehensible reticence in the transmission of news. While "one" in Kiel had already kept silent about the events in the High Seas Fleet in the most insistent manner, so that even commanders of large ships remained without any knowledge, the High Seas Fleet, on the other hand, was not informed about the events that had taken place in Kiel in the meantime until the morning of November 4. A telegram from the naval command at the Grand Headquarters in Spa, Belgium, according to which the resistance was to be broken by all force, reveals only too clearly by its date of issue, November 6, 1918, that even the reporting to Spa could not possibly have been exhaustive and urgent.

The revolution of the High Seas Fleet probably had supporters not only among the crews; there were simply too many "coincidences"! Were high-ranking German personalities concerned with preventing a possible deployment of the High Seas Fleet for political reasons?

This is supported by the fact that an attack by the German battle fleet would probably have toppled Max von Baden's government, which wanted to prevent a breakdown of the armistice negotiations with Wilson at almost any cost - regardless of the outcome: A lost naval battle would have rendered the German armistice negotiations implausible and led to the formation of a new government in Berlin. A naval victory, on the other hand, would have discredited the chancellor's "defeatist" peace program and also brought about a change of government.

Max von Baden had learned that high-ranking personalities had already approached the un-noble leading general Max von Gallwitz about becoming the new "dictator" in Germany instead of the von Baden government. Von Gallwitz had declined - and informed the chancellor. One was warned!

Max von Baden emphasized in the post-war period that he had not known about the planned advance and would probably have agreed to it.

This was probably not the case for his surroundings.

The fleet advance already planned at the beginning of the armistice negotiations was to be carried out even after Ludendorff's resignation.

"Operations Order 19" was thus intended as a signal for counterrevolution, but instead became an accelerator of revolution and overthrow in the Reich. As early as November 19, 1918, the German fleet had to be handed over to the Allies. This was called "internment." The British had threatened to shoot at any ship that showed the Red Flag. They were not quite sure of the possible danger of contagion to their own ship crews.

The Allies had been amazed at how willingly the new German government handed over the former pride of the Kaiser to them. The fact that the originally promised internment in a neutral country was not honored either did not seem to interest anyone in the new German leadership around Ebert.

In order to prevent a possible taking away by the English at the end of the Versailles negotiations, Admiral von Reuter had the former proud fleet sink itself in Scapa Flow on June 21, 1919. To this day, people argue about the sense or nonsense of this measure, which led to several deaths on the German side.

A fitting end to Germany's dream of sea sailing!

In the sea of fire of the revolution

The growing unrest in the Reich had not escaped the attention of the Supreme Army Command. The serious danger of a revolution had been expected for some time - but not until the winter of 1918/19.

In the midst of the decisive battle in the West, however, it was forced as early as the beginning of October 1918 to move tested front-line troops to the home area, especially to the greater Berlin area, in order to be able to take action against insurgents in an emergency.

The German request for peace to U.S. President Wilson on October 3-4, 1918, had acted as a beacon to the disaffected left.

Thus, on October 7, 1918, an imperial conference of radical groups was held in Gotha. There was less and less timidity about proclaiming open revolution during the war.

It was to become the second link of the world revolution after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and to pass the spark to Paris and London.

The "Spartakusbund," headed by Karl Liebknecht, who had been released from prison since October 1918, favored individual political actions, demonstrations, the instigation of strikes and acts of sabotage, as well as calls for desertion and conscientious objection.

The revolutionary trade union leaders under Emil Barth and Hermann Müller thought less of this "new revolutionary gymnastics" than of secret conspiracies with the ultimate goal of a great putsch under dictatorial leadership, which was to break out at a precisely determined hour throughout the Reich. Their firmly organized and well-disciplined revolutionary shock troops were to quickly make themselves masters of the street when the revolution began.

The revolutionaries did not lack money. The Russian embassy in Berlin provided it to them in large quantities.

Weapons were also procured by stealing them from weapons depots and

by buying them from "vacationers" and deserters who had forgotten their duties.

At the joint conference in Gotha, it was decided to follow the proven Bolshevik methods that culminated in the council system.

A revolutionary committee was formed under the leadership of Emil Barth, which also included Karl Liebknecht, Georg Ledebour, Wilhelm Dittmann and Hugo Haase.

The armed uprising was first decided there for November 4, then set for November 6. Through informers in the Spartacus League, however, the Prussian police had been put in the picture and arrested the revolutionaries' "military chief of staff," Pioneer Captain Eduard Walz, on November 3.

While in custody, Walz betrayed his friends, who, fearing further police raids, postponed their action until November 14.

An organized armed uprising could thus just be prevented, since on November 8, in addition to further arrests, Ernst Däumig, the actual leader, was also arrested.

The spark that set the empire on fire thus did not come from Berlin, but from the mutiny of the High Seas Fleet and the events in Munich. Here, it was 1000 mutinous sailors from the Austrian war port of Pola who arrived in Munich on November 3. One had not dared to transport them further to Kiel.

By November 7, revolutionaries in Munich had overthrown the 738-year rule of the Wittelsbach dynasty. The King of Bavaria and his family fled abroad.

After that, the spark spread to all German residential cities. Just 2 days later, the entire country was a sea of revolutionary fire. Panic-stricken by the masses of workers, Reich Chancellor Max von Baden everywhere gave in to the wishes of the leader of the SPD, Friedrich Ebert.

On November 8, 1918, the armistice negotiations began in the forest of Compiègne: a whimper for "Wilson peace" where one could have demanded, for the most powerful army in the world was still under arms. When the French commander-in-chief, Marshal Foch, caught sight of the German armistice delegation in black skirts and top hat, he is said to have exclaimed, half mockingly, half affected, "That's Germany!?"

On November 9, Prince Max von Baden declared from Berlin the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II without his consent. For fear of further consequences, however, he then thought it better to immediately transfer his power to SPD leader Friedrich Ebert in a coup d'état.

Shortly thereafter, Reichstag deputies Philipp Scheidemann (SPD) and Karl Liebknecht (USPD) independently proclaimed a republic in Berlin. They had been working towards this for so long - so better two republics than none!

On the same day, the German delegation in Compiègne was handed the brutal armistice terms; it now became clear that they were to be cheated with the "Wilson Peace," although the Americans had promised one as late as November 5. The enemy armies, which in reality were themselves collapsing, now dictated the armistice terms.

Unbelievably, the armistice commission sent from Berlin to France did not let any communication about the content of the Allied conditions reach the OHL headquarters in Spa during the decisive hours of November 9. They wanted to make the decision in Berlin about the further procedure without the military! The "spooning out of the soup" took place quite voluntarily.

On the same day, General Groener had reported to Wilhelm II that the army did not want to put down the revolutionaries for him. It could also no longer fight at the front, it wanted peace above all, therefore it was imperative that any armistice be concluded, since the army only had rations for 6 to 8 days and was cut off from any supplies by the rebels, who had

occupied all rations magazines and Rhine bridges.

Wilhelm Groener reportedly felt unable to move against the rebels with loyal troops because of "supply and transport problems" in order to clear the supply routes to the front.

The army was then severely shaken by the mistaken belief that their ruler had abandoned them at the critical moment by resigning.

When Admiral Scheer tried to change Wilhelm II's mind by telling him to think of his navy and not to renounce the throne, the emperor confessed deeply affected: "I don't have a navy anymore!"

In the meantime, the revolution had eaten its way to the highest levels of German leadership.

Even at the OHL in Spa, a soldiers' council was set up, and while the general strike was called in Berlin, there was widespread looting by marauders in the stage area of the Western Front.

Revolutionaries from the staging areas sold modern weapons from the occupied depots to the enemy Belgians.

In Berlin, too, the home front was now rapidly breaking away: War Minister Scheuch had to report to his monarch, who was still bravely at Belgian headquarters:

Uncertainty among parts of the troops in Berlin, the 4th Jäger, 2.

Company of Alexander Regiment, 2nd Battery Jüterbog had gone over to the insurgents; no street fighting.

No one was any longer willing to take action against the revolutionaries in the face of chaos and weak leadership at home.

On November 10, therefore, the OHL, led by General Groener, sent word to the government in Berlin and to the German negotiating commission in Compiegne that, since events at home had deprived the army of its backing, the OHL no longer had the means to reject the armistice demands or to use arms to force an improvement in the situation. At the same time, Groener issued a declaration of loyalty to the new SPD-led Ebert government.

Fig. 49 Wilhelm Groener (1867-1939), previously Chief of the General Staff in Army Group Eichhorn, was appointed

October 26, 1918, after Ludendorff's dismissal and was now practically the Chief of the Supreme Army Command. As such unlike Ludendorff, he did not share the idea of resistance and directed the march of German troops back from the Western and the demobilization in the home bases. On June 23, 1919

he advocated unconditional acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles

Kaiser Wilhelm II now left his headquarters in Spa and departed by court train for the Netherlands. Fearing revolutionaries, he bypassed Liège by car and reached the Dutch border town of Eijsden. The court train then followed later.

Instead of sacrificing himself at the head of his guard on horseback in a heroic saber-drawn charge against the Allies, which some loyalists advised him to do (and would probably have saved the monarchy), the ex-emperor listened to whispers of General Groener and capitulated to the revolution

Thus, the monarchy in Germany not only lost its claim to power, but also its reputation among the many soldiers who were still loyal to the emperor. Was this intentional on Groener's part?

Like so many other leaders who had no qualms about countless subjects being sent to their deaths in their name, Wilhelm II put his own life above the reason of state.

In the evening of the same day, at about 10:29 p.m., Field Marshal Hindenburg sent a telegram to the entire German Western Army. In it, the cessation of hostilities was consequently announced - already a few hours before the armistice officially came into force.

According to Hindenburg, the homeland should be spared a new civil war

despite all the political upheaval. Weapons should only be used against members of one's own people in cases of self-defense, common crimes or looting. The leaders (officers) would have to come to an amicable agreement with the workers' and soldiers' councils that were being formed. Hindenburg thus deprived a possible organized counterrevolution of its basis.

Unlike in Austria-Hungary, where the bulk of the army fell into Italian captivity even after the armistice, the OHL under General Groener succeeded in returning the Western Army home in an orderly manner.

Many units brought all their equipment and horses with them. Even though Ludendorff's successor certainly had his share in the quick demise of the old system, he thus achieved an organizational masterstroke.

The situation was different for the former Austrian comrades: Due to tricky behavior and "difficulties" of the Austrians, the Italians had ceased hostilities only 24 hours after accepting the armistice conditions.

There had been no fighting since November 1, and the disbanding or mutinous Austro-Hungarian armies had left the to be of their strangulation rushing forward, Italian cavalry and motorcades were allowed to pass without difficulty until they closed the trap in South Tyrol and declared everyone a prisoner.

After the collapse, rumors quickly surfaced in the former dual monarchy, which were never refuted, that the new government had wanted as many soldiers as possible to be kept away from the homeland because it feared food difficulties and because people feared for peace and order due to the dangerousness of undisciplined armed soldiers.

In view of their own weakness and the still intact German field army, the Western Allies would not have been capable of a similar act on the Western Front. Instead, they followed the retreating German field army at a distance of several kilometers.

Many of the German front-line troops returning home from the World War then faced the new conditions at home in disbelief.

The revolutionary soldiers' councils were already waiting at the Rhine bridges - at a safe distance from the front!

The soldiers' councils disrupted communications, interfered with transport operations, confiscated mainly motor vehicles and foodstuffs, eliminated important enlisted personalities who were inconvenient to them, caused smaller units to leave or leave on their own authority, and stopped rations and coal trains. The officer corps, still deeply shaken by the alleged abdication and flight of the emperor, largely resigned and behaved as inconspicuously as possible toward the new rulers in Berlin.

Inwardly, however, it was seething in large parts of the front-line army: they felt undefeated and stabbed in the back from behind, at a time when the political "stab in the back legend" had not yet been formulated. It is therefore not surprising that when the new republic wanted to fire on the revolutionaries who had slipped away from it in December 1918, the "reliable" seven infantry battalions sent to Berlin for this purpose all refused to obey and simply went home.

Only later did volunteer associations, often formed on their own initiative on the ground, clarify the situation. Although very reluctant to support the new republic, the many "Freikorps" fought furiously against communist revolutionaries and Polish pressure on the new eastern borders. The armistice signed on November 11 was for the time being limited to only 36 days.

Here, too, the German side allowed itself to be shown up by the Allies, for because of this limitation, extensions were repeatedly necessary; it was not until mid-February 1919 that the armistice was considered unlimited. Before the extensions that were therefore due in December, January and February 1919, the Allies continually made new, tougher demands on Germany.

In 1918, the German delegation had to sign the harsh terms of the armistice; in 1940, the French signed their armistice with the Third Reich in the same carriage at the same place. In contrast to 1918, the German conditions were so generous that France almost went to war with England.

The "Compiegne Car" has disappeared since 1945. Small remnants turned up in Thuringia after reunification and were handed over to France.

The German delegations accepted everything; not even the food deliveries to the starving German civilian population announced in the original November text were enforced.

Compiegne: on the right, the procession of German plenipotentiaries to
conclude
armistice; on the left, Marshal Foch's procession

When Marshal Foch returned from the third extension of the armistice in Trier in February 1919, he cynically reported that the Germans would give in to all demands if only they were made in time. Erzberger, he said, was quite small, talking the government into yielding under any circumstances. The German government was currently more afraid of the Red Spartacists than of the Allied peace demands.

Apparently Erzberger and the government in Berlin did not want to notice that in England, too, strikes were breaking out again and again and the soldiers were running away from the regiments. Even the French fleet in Odessa had truly mutinied and fraternized with the Bolsheviks.

According to Foch's report, Clemenceau was said to have rubbed his hands: So go for it! Now the next thing to do was to make "amends".

The drama of Versailles began!

Churchill's "mistake" or: Did foreign money play a role in the German defeat?

Revolution and sedition require money! According to today's knowledge, the money for the "German revolution" flowed from three sources: from the propaganda fund of the Entente, from the state coffers of the Russian Bolsheviks and from certain German circles around Privy Councillor Wittig.

It became known that in March 1918 a meeting had taken place in Berlin at the Aschinger restaurant between an American agent named Ridder, who had arrived from Holland, and various revolutionary confidants. Not only were details of the planned revolution discussed, but Ridder also handed out large sums of money to the participants. Ridder held a similar meeting in Hamburg.

The connection between Entente money and the naval uprising is dealt with elsewhere.

In addition to direct revolutionization, a large number of agents of influence also played a role, receiving money from a Russian-born socialist Jew operating in Switzerland named Leo Wolfsohn, alias Mandelbaum.

Wolfsohn, who is said to have received his funds from the British consulate in Zurich, is said to have "guided" 1000 people by 1915.

Dr. Oskar Cohn, a Social Democratic member of the Reichstag, had received ten million rubles from the Soviet ambassador Adolf Joffe in November 1918 for the purpose of the German revolution. After the revolution, he became State Secretary in the Justice Department, i.e. the highest representative of the German judiciary.

When he was later called to account in the Reichstag for accepting Russian money, he explicitly acknowledged that he had "gladly accepted the money" and only regretted that he had not been able to use the entire amount. A return was not documented.

A report published in 1919 on the financing of revolutionary movements directed against the German Reich during World War I stated:

The real crime of the revolution begins where the money of the Entente, the mammon of the enemies of the German people, became allies of the German revolutionaries.

Later, members of the British elite saw this as a major mistake. In 1932, for example, Winston Churchill told Reinhard Henschel, the son of a German industrialist with whom he was acquainted:

It was a mistake that we allowed the abolition of the monarchy in Germany after the First World War.

He meant that even after 14 years, the fall of the monarchy did not feel good to anyone - neither in Germany nor among the victorious powers.

- had had a liberating effect.

The new, half-baked democratic republic in Weimar seemed paralyzed and was increasingly heckled from the left and the right.

As a result, Churchill Henschel predicted a new European catastrophe as a war against Germany - "one way or another," he meant!

CHAPTER 7

What would have happened if fighting had resumed from October 1918?

Was Germany threatened by an Armageddon in 1919? This scenario is at least frequently outlined by modern historiography, like this: If the war had not ended so quickly at the end of 1918, the completely superior Allies would have brought the apocalypse upon a recalcitrant Germany in 1919.

The once proud imperial army had been crushed in the "Hundred Days Offensive"; only helpless remnants had been at the mercy of the completely superior Allies in the unprotected open terrain.

Winston Churchill described this thesis, common in today's writings, in his book *The Gathering Storm* thus:

Everything that happened in the 4 years of the great war was only a prelude to what was about to happen in the 5th year. Continuing the fighting in 1919 would have brought an enormous increase in the violence of destruction. Had the Germans kept their morale to make the most of their retreat to the Rhine, they would have been attacked in the summer of 1919 with forces and by methods incomparably more formidable than anything that had been used before. Thousands of planes would have destroyed their cities, batteries with thousands of guns would have swept away their front positions. Preparations were under way to bring a quarter of a million men, complete with equipment, overland to the front in mechanized vehicles. Extremely aggressive poison gas, from which only a secret mask protected, but which the Germans could not obtain in time, would have broken all resistance and paralyzed life on the enemy front.

Shortly after the end of the war in 1918, Churchill had expressed himself quite differently when he spoke of the war having ended at the last minute, fortunately for the Allies. He had probably just forgotten this in his book.

In fact, the Allies had not developed any new gas at all that would have been superior to German substances.

The Entente developed only a substance modeled on the German "yellow cross" and brought it to the front in 1918. It was called "Yperite" on the French side and mustard gas by the British.

It is correct that the Allies wanted to rain this gas from the air from long-range bombers over German cities on the unprotected civilian population from 1919 on. A war crime was announced!

Incidentally, the German gas masks remained superior to their Allied counterparts until the end of the war. A new mask-breaking substance, against which only a supposedly secret Allied mask would help, did not exist either.

In fact, there was an Allied plan for the apocalyptic destruction of Germany and its inhabitants mentioned by Churchill. We will discuss it further below. In 1919, because of the armistice, it had no chance of realization; it was not until 1944/45, at the end of the "second round", that it came to pass.

Did the Entente plan the mass murder of German civilians from the air?

During World War I, German, British, and French long-range air forces increasingly bombed enemy civilian populations.

German zeppelins and long-range air forces attacked London and Paris by day and by night from 1915 until August 1918.

England suffered 1414 air war deaths and 2416 injuries. The total material damage of 3 million pounds sterling caused by the various air raids contrasted with daily war expenditures by the British of 7 million pounds sterling in 1918.

In the course of the aerial bombardment of Paris by German long-range aircraft, which dragged on from March to September 16, 1918, 237 Frenchmen were killed and 539 injured.

Germany, too, had been regularly attacked by Entente aviators since the outbreak of the war. At first, this involved, among other things, systematic bombing of the Lorraine-Luxembourg industrial area of Diedenhofen, which accounted for more than half of all bombs dropped on German territory during the war.

One-sixth of all bombs fell on the industrial area around the Moselle and Saar rivers, followed by the regions of Freiburg, Mannheim, Karlsruhe and Cologne. Only very isolated attacks hit Essen, Hamburg and Munich.

The number of air war casualties from Allied bombs in World War I in Germany was 729 killed and 1754 injured.

The losses were particularly high in the last year of the war. The Prussian War Ministry put the material damage at 23.5 million gold marks: hardly a significant amount in view of the 180 million gold marks in daily war costs of the German Reich in 1918.

The increasingly frequent day and night attacks on the Reich territory at speeds of up to 200 km/h, at altitudes of up to 7000 meters and with a penetration depth of up to 400 kilometers from the front led on the German side to the establishment of a barrage, which can be regarded as the precursor of the later "Air Defense Zone West" of 1938.

Two surveillance lines from the North Sea to Lake Constance - one following the range of the enemy and the second about 15 kilometers behind - were to give advance warning to the flak and fighter pilots of the homeland air defenses and thus improve defensive conditions. Of a total of 1154 air raids on the homeland in World War I, eight occurred in 1914 compared with 637 (234 at night) in 1918.

The integrated German air defense system claimed ever greater victims among the attacking Allied bombers. In the summer of 1918, the Entente lost 104 day bombers and 34 night bombers to German defensive actions, and 320 crashed behind Allied lines.

In the night of September 16-17, 1918, ten four-engine Handley Page O/400s were lost. The German defense shot down seven of them. In the following nights, for "special reasons", hardly any more Handley Page attacks on Germany took place until the armistice. The "unfavorable weather" had to be held responsible for the omitted flights.

Nevertheless, the RAF lost a total of 67 of the Handley-Page Viermots. The Independent Air Force under General Trenchard, which was formed on June 6, 1918, from subunits, a kind of forerunner of the later notorious RAF Bomber Command, lost so many day and night bomber aircraft in the bombardment of the German hinterland that it was not able to carry out the planned organized large-scale attacks against Germany until the end of the war. In September, the Independent Air Force lost 75 percent of its inventory!

Therefore, the planners came up with another idea. The "Independent Air Force" wanted to modify the British long-range air forces by the end of 1918 so that they could fly attacks against Berlin.

"Handley-Page-O/400" squadrons were now to launch against the German capital from airfields in Czechoslovakia. How was this possible?

As a result of the Austrian capitulation, the old dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary had disintegrated into several countries, of which Czechoslovakia in particular adopted an anti-German stance and invited the Allies to wage war against the Reich.

The 216 Sqn. with O/400 would have made the start here. It was to be transferred to Prague in early November 1918.

In the spring of 1919, plans were made to fly heavy retaliatory air attacks against Berlin from there, bypassing the German air defense belt - including the use of poison gas!

Later, "Vickers Vimy" bombers, which were still being tested at the time, would also have been brought in for use with gas bombs.

The new "Handley Page V/1500" were to fly directly from England to Berlin.

These barbaric plans of the British General Staff and Winston Churchill to unleash a gas war from the air against the civilian population of German cities did not come to fruition because of the end of the war.

Contrast this with the German decision in the summer of 1918 not to launch the long-range bombers against London and Paris, which were already ready with the novel electron incendiary bombs, and to mothball this terrible weapon during the war.

It can be assumed that the actual outcome of World War I would not have been influenced by the planned mass murder with gas against the unprotected German civilian population.

While poison gas was spread by all sides during World War I, despite all the fierce fighting up to that point, no country had allowed the deadly gases to be rained or dropped from the air.

Here, a new quality of mass destruction emerged, as the civilian population would have been unsuspectingly exposed to doom without any protective measures.

Then, in the post-war period, people wanted to grow silence about these plans.

The British had not developed their gas bombs for nothing. In 1919, RAF planes dropped gas on Bolshevik troops in Russia. In 1920, England - again at the suggestion of Winston Churchill - used gas from the air against

rebellious tribes in Iraq. Egypt and India were also considered as possible locations for use, which is still denied by the British today.

The Italians later eagerly adopted the British idea and dropped massive amounts of poison gas bombs over Abyssinia in 1936 with deadly success.

Could the U-boats have decided the war in 1919 in Germany's favor?

When Germany announced unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1, 1917, against the will of the political leadership of the time, the Admiralty had promised, contrary to the opinion of its own experts, that it would be able to defeat Great Britain within 6 months. Since this did not happen, the date is still considered the "death day" of the Empire, because unrestricted submarine warfare was allegedly taken by the USA as an opportunity to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

Basically, it was the second attempt, because already on February 22, 1915, the Reich government had declared unrestricted submarine warfare against merchant ships within a restricted area around Great Britain. On May 15, 1915, it was lifted again as a result of the "Lusitania" incident, when "U-20" torpedoed the ocean liner loaded with civilians and American munitions for England in the middle of the restricted area.

Many ask, not without reason, whether World War I would have been different if Germany had entered in August 1914 with a much larger number of submarines. The only submarine sent into the English Channel, "U-9", had sunk three British armored cruisers on the 22nd of that month.

After the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, the number of available front-line submarines had risen to 126 by May 1917. Of these, an average of 47 boats were at sea per day at that time. This number rose slightly to 55 in June, then fell back to 41 boats in July. Every day the number of sinkings, and thus the loss of Allied shipping space, rose and fell almost in direct proportion to the number of front-line boats in action. That the unrestricted submarine warfare did not lead to possible success was also due to the strange behavior of certain gentlemen at the Reichsmarineamt.

Although there were already far too few submersibles for this war-decisive campaign when unrestricted submarine warfare was announced, in February 1917 the Reichsmarineamt showed itself willing only to order submarines that could be delivered by early 1918. Placing orders for boats to be completed later was not necessary, it was said, and represented an unnecessary burden on the post-war budget (!).

Full of despair, since in the absence of new orders in 1918 there would have to be large gaps in the submarine inventory, the U-Boots-Inspektion (U. I.) and the MAN engine company turned to the Oberste Heeresleitung. In the end, the General Staff of the Army - i.e. the Navy's "natural enemy" when it came to armament spending - had to turn to the Admiral's Staff with the urgent request that a drop in submarine production be prevented at all costs.

From July 1917, the small number of submarines in service made a further increase in the number of sinkings seem almost impossible. Was this intentional?

Under these circumstances, it did not seem surprising that from the fall of 1917 the front itself became concerned with this obvious failure. U-boat Commodore Michelsen and the High Seas Fleet therefore pushed through the creation of the U-Boot-Amt at the end of 1917, which, as an independent department of the Reichsmarineamt, was to take charge of the material and personnel organization of the U-boat war. The head of the U-Boot-Amt, Vice Admiral von Ritter, succeeded in reducing the delays in the delivery of U-boat materials, which were still being caused by "unscrupulous forces", by means of suitable organizational measures.

Thus, it was homegrown reasons that prevented a sufficiently large fleet of submarines from successfully blockading England and the United States just as American troop shipments were leaving for Europe.

Although 179 Imperial Navy submarines were destroyed in combat during the war, the Germans still possessed 171 submarines at the time of the armistice. Another 149 were in various stages of completion. With such a strong submarine Germany would have been in a position to reignite the U-boat war with great energy from 1919 onward

It is therefore also difficult to understand when today's experts - such as Professor Robert M. Grant in his book *U-Boat Destroyed* - declare that

Allied anti-U-boat warfare would have decisively defeated the U-boats in the last year of the war.

The Allies sank a total of 69 German submarines in 1918, compared with 63 submarines in 1917, and this despite vastly expanded antisubmarine defenses. The number of new submarine builds kept pace with the losses, with boats being launched with continuous improvements in performance and armament. This figure alone indicates that the combined Allied defenses just kept the U-boat numbers in check and could not reduce the threat they posed. In fact, the U-boat weapon was the only weapon left in Germany's strategic arsenal at the end of the war in 1918 that was capable of winning the war through a relentless offensive by means of a counter-blockade.

There is no question that the unleashing of the "unrestricted submarine war" in 1917 was strategically correct, despite the official entry of the United States of America into the war. The USA had long since become an indirect party to the war.

In truth, it was not the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare that brought America into the war at all. U.S. President Wilson, cornered by Senator McCumber, publicly admitted in the summer of 1919 that he was convinced the United States would have entered the fight against Germany even without unrestricted submarine warfare. Unrestricted submarine warfare began in February 1917 with such tremendous blows that the situation in England was strained to the utmost.

Measured in gross tons, 770,000 tons were sunk in February, 800,000 tons in March, almost 1.2 million in April, and again over 1 million tons in May and June of that year. The unrestricted submarine warfare did not even affect all important sea areas, as we will show elsewhere.

When American Admiral Sims came to London in April 1917 to discuss joint warfare, he was forced to conclude, "The Germans are not likely to lose the war, but to win it." He was shocked: "I had not imagined anything so terrible."

And Admiral John Jellicoe, one of the highest-ranking British naval officers, could only confirm, "Yes, if casualties continue at this rate, we cannot continue the war. There is no longer any point in making plans for the coming year." Sims concluded his report by saying, "In short, it is my opinion that we are instantly losing the war."

The bloodletting of merchant shipping by German U-boats in the spring of 1917 was almost enough to force England to make peace. Thus, the English Prime Minister Lloyd George and the French Prime Minister Ribot were already about to travel to Rome to talk with their Italian counterpart about the initiation of peace negotiations.

Only the publication of the memorandum by the Austrian Count Czernin, which portrayed Austria's situation as desperate, induced them to postpone their intention.

When Commodore Michelsen, until then leader of the torpedo boats, was appointed commander of the U-boats in July 1917, he noticed that the sinking figures of his "knights of the deep," as the German submariners were then called, were gradually decreasing.

By the end of 1917, however, with the exception of November, they still amounted to over 600000 tons per month. The unbelievably high figure of 1 million GRT of damaged shipping clogged the British shipyards in January 1918.

In response, the Allies tried to build merchant ships faster than the German enemy could send them to the bottom of the sea. For this purpose, further construction of light cruisers and three sister ships of the battle cruiser "Hood" had to be stopped.

The ports of the world were scoured for tonnage, decrepit steamers fetched fabulous prices, and even historic sailing ships that had been abandoned or moored in port as residential vessels were repaired and sent out to the perilous seas as U-boat fodder. Neutral shipping was radically "persuaded" to sail for the Allies. Nevertheless, in 1917 only 1163000 GRT of new shipping space were added, but this was offset by a net loss of 4010000 GRT.

The Western Allies were also on the verge of famine in the winter of 1917/18. As a result of crop shortages and the convoy system (!) introduced because of submarine warfare, the supply of grain in Great Britain dropped so much in the winter of 1917/18 that the "specter of famine" was looming. At the same time, the French army's grain supply shrank to two days' rations. In 1917, only three-quarters and in 1918 as much as two-thirds of the pre-war food supply could be imported. This was due to the German submarines.

As late as the spring of 1918, when despite all measures American troops could not at first be transported to Europe fast enough to stop the German armies' triumphant run, disaster was averted only by the brutal seizure of all Dutch merchant ship tonnage.

In the process, German politicians weakened the potential penetrating power of submarine warfare by making homemade concessions: Even after the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, it was punctured many times. For example, at the request of the Foreign Office, neutral ship cargo space was repeatedly allowed to be supplied to the Entente - for the sake of some imagined advantage. Some important sea areas were even excluded from the unrestricted submarine warfare for political reasons.

As an Allied measure, there was an incredibly elaborate mining of the German submarines' areas of operation and approach. The British mine barriers in the German Bight, between Norway and Scapa Flow, the English east coast, and in the Mediterranean near Otranto proved completely ineffective. Only a strong psychological effect on the passing submarine crews was the result. The narrow Strait of Dover alone could be blocked by mines to a large extent for the submarines of the Flanders Flotilla from the summer of 1918.

The introduction of the convoy system was to prove decisive for England's survival. During the 17-month period from July 1917 to November 1918, German U-boats managed to carry out only 84 successful attacks as lone carriers against hundreds of convoys running at the time. Of the 219 Atlantic convoys U-boats sighted only 39 at all!

The submarine commanders, who attacked individually only during the day, were forced by the escort to switch to torpedo attack under water, which limited the number of possible attacks. Due to the low underwater speed of the submarines, these only had a chance of success if the convoys were on a favorable course.

The use of convoys, in which a larger number of merchant ships were grouped together under the protection of warships with air support, the support of American submarine hunters and seaplanes and, last but not least, the insufficient number of German submarines led to a steady decline in sinking successes. Thus, in September 1918, just 116237 GRT of shipping could be sent to the bottom of the sea. As late as August, however, German

captains had still sunk exactly as many ships as the Allies were able to build anew.

One of the great successes nevertheless achieved was the sinking of the 32120 GRT English "White Star" liner "Justicia" by three independently operating German submarines. Despite being escorted by 18 destroyers and 16 fishing trawlers, "UB 64", "U 54" and "UB 124" had been able to torpedo one of the largest and fastest ships in the world off the north coast of Ireland several times from July 19 to 20 until it sank to the bottom of the sea. The poor morale of the English crews on the "Justicia", but also that of the securing vessels, contributed to the disaster.

War weariness was not just a German trait!

These spectacular individual successes, however, did little to drown out the submarines' impending defeat in the "Battle of Tonnage."

From the summer of 1918, the Germans therefore planned effective measures to counter the decline in sinking successes.

Whereas until 1918 there were at most only 180 operational submarines at the enemy's disposal, the tireless activity of Admiral Reinhard Scheer, who had taken over the naval command in the summer of 1918, succeeded in considerably increasing the number of submarines, so that in 1919 well over 300 submarines, including many U-cruisers, would have been ready for use. To evaluate this figure correctly, it must be noted that Grand Admiral Dönitz had no more than 200 front-line boats at his disposal during World War II at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943. As early as December 1917, 30 large and 90 small submarines had been ordered, and in June 1918 another 64 large and 156 small boats. A number of shipyards not previously involved in submarine construction, up to and including the inland rivers, were called upon to participate in the submarine program.

But this was only the beginning, for in September/October 1918 Admiral Scheer had his "Scheer Program" announced. It contained a new order for 330 boats, including 117 large ones.

The British quickly learned of Scheer's plans, and by the end of September 1918, Sir Eric Geddes, the Lord of the Admiralty, was warning of a new war-deciding German submarine offensive.

For this order, contact was made with the industrial magnate Hugo

Stinnes. The leading men of the entire German industry submarine construction Cologne and Berlin to determine the most expedient distribution of the individual Above all, it was determined how much work the inland industry could relieve the shipyards, which were consistently overloaded. All the raw materials and supplies required for the Scheer program were available.

Finally, the OHL provided the Navy with the manpower that had been requested in vain for years. All that was missing was time!

As a result, when the revolution broke out in November 1918, the incredible figure of 440 boats was under construction. The planned monthly output was to be increased from 12 boats to 16 in the last quarter of 1918 and 36 in the fourth quarter of 1919.

However, if the war had continued, not only would a more than sufficient number of submarines have been available, but also new operational and tactical forms of deployment would have been used.

Fig. 56

Vice Admiral Hermann Bauer (1875-1958) took over the large liner SMS Kaiser August

and the large liners SMS Oldenburg and SMS Nassau the same time

As early as the spring of 1918, then Frigate Captain Bauer, leader of the submarines subordinate to Fleet Command, had requested that the first completed U-cruiser be placed at his disposal so that he could see for himself west of Ireland in what form joint operation of submarines against convoys was possible. The request was refused.

In 1917 and 1918, then-Corvette Captains Hans Rose and Otto Schultze had also made proposals for joint operation of submarines against convoys.

A first attempt at a "concentration" of submarines against convoys in the Atlantic (May 10-25, 1918) failed, as the submarines were widely spread over a huge sea area and the guide boat "U 103" was sunk prematurely by a ramming blow from the troopship "Majestic".

Mixed "submarine operations" (group approach of several submarines) took place in the Mediterranean Sea in January as well as in September and October 1918. Shortly before the armistice in mid-October 1918, there was probably the first successful joint attack by a group of U-boats against an Allied convoy.

A plan of the commander of the submarines (BdU) of August 1918, according to which a group of submarine cruisers organized as a pack under the leadership of Captain Rose was to go on a convoy hunt at the western exit of the channel, could not be realized in time.

Thus, the idea of "pack tactics," which helped Grand Admiral Dönitz achieve fame in World War II, had already been practically tested during the First World War. In the Mediterranean theater of war, the tactic was already on the verge of being introduced. In the Atlantic, it would have followed shortly thereafter! The later Grand Admiral Dönitz then refined this early pack tactic in conversation with U-boat captains during his captivity in England. In the Third Reich, it would later bring the Allies to the brink of

disaster!

If the German navy had actually moved to attack Allied convoys with U-boats concentrated in groups in 1919, this would probably have become a decisive factor.

Without radar Asdic, HF/DF equipment, and ENIGMA as in World War II, Anglo-American escort vessels would have been largely powerless against the surfaced German submarines attacking in packs at night in 1919.

Only the Submarine Tracking Room "OB 40" promised some help to the Allies. The British Admiralty used it to try to decode the radio transmissions of German U-boats in real time in order to warn convoys of the presence of the "Knights of the Deep" and to guide the convoys' routes around them.

German long-range reconnaissance using airships over the North Atlantic promised a revolutionary improvement for anti-submarine warfare. Loaded with more than 30 tons of fuel, the high-speed L-70 class zeppelins, with their range of more than 3,000 miles, were able to watch for Allied convoys and bring in the U-boats after flying over northern Scotland for 3 or 4 days over the waters of the North Atlantic.

separately into the various phases of submarine warfare.

After the Navy Zeppelins had proved hardly usable for attack flights over England because of the Allied fighter planes, the Admiral's Staff had agreed to their use over the Atlantic for 1919. The method was not used there before the armistice.

According to the British Admiralty, 5334 merchant ships of 12179906 GRT were lost during World War I, while the former leader of the submarines, Admiral Michelsen, states 18726488 GRT. In addition, there were 100 warships of all sizes with 366490 GRT.

In 1917, 9.2 million GRT of shipping were sunk. In 1918, the sinking figures still reached an impressive 5.112 million GRT.

In the post-war period, the German author Bodo Herzog himself undercut the sinking figures already admitted by the British Admiralty, with 11948702 GRT of sunk ships. His figures are - politically correct - considered to be the valid truth today.

Be that as it may, on October 21, 1918, the new German government under Max von Baden yielded to President Wilson's urging and issued an order prohibiting the torpedoing of cargo and passenger ships. The U-boat war was thus considered effectively over. The submarines were ordered back to the Reich. On the same October 21, 1918, Scheer's program was halted with the abandonment of submarine warfare by Max von Baden's government. The dangerous submarine cruisers had been recalled from the American coast by the Admiral's Staff earlier, on October 10, 1918, as a preliminary service to Wilson. On November 9, the boats were ordered to enter their ports. The last trump card of the Empire was not played.

The aforementioned successes had to be paid for with a loss rate of 40 percent of all U-boat crews deployed. Of 13,000 German submariners deployed, 515 officers and 4849 sailors remained at sea.

The severity of losses from fierce Allied anti-submarine warfare and mines can be seen in the number of German front-line boats alone: The year 1917 began with 132 and ended with 121 boats. In 1918, as a result of increased countermeasures by the Entente, more German submarines were temporarily lost than were added from new production. Still, it was a close-run affair.

Despite the reduction in the amount of shipping space sunk from September 1918, the time was again approaching in the fall/winter when the British economy could no longer cope with the permanently effective deprivation of shipping space and when, according to many unchallenged English statements, for example by Winston Churchill, the collapse was once again just around the corner.

The mood in the United Kingdom was extremely agitated; the City of London was said to be extremely war-weary, as neutral observers reported. In the fall of 1918, the Entente suffered from external conditions that were hardly inferior to those of the Germans in terms of harshness.

Another major problem was to supply the vast numbers of barely equipped U.S. soldiers who had been thrown into France with provisions and supplies in the face of ever-decreasing cargo space. The "tonnage gap" widened by the end of the war!

According to Rear Admiral Kurt Graßhoff, the extent to which the Entente was at the end of its cargo space powers is also evident from the fact

that in early October 1918 Wilson demanded that submarine warfare against passenger liners, i.e., submarine warfare in general, be discontinued before entering into armistice negotiations.

This demand was conceded by the new German cabinet of Max von Baden without compensation - against the objection of the Supreme Army and Navy Command and at the request of the Foreign Office, which was reinforced by three envoys.

As a condition of the armistice, Germany had to surrender all submarines to the Entente as of November 20, 1918.

Korvettenkapitän Friedrich Lützow, at that time Admiral Staff Officer at the BdU (Commander of Submarines in the High Seas Forces), reported on this:

At that time, when our ships and submarines were delivered to England after the armistice, officers, NCOs and crews were asked several times by English naval personnel why we had concluded armistice - whether we had not known that England should have concluded peace in the winter of 1918/19.

Fig. 58 "Staggered" retreat battles of the 204th and 243rd. Infantry Division in November 1918. Army Group Kronprinz Rupprecht.

Thus, the upheaval in Germany also put an early end to the English worries here. Here, too, it was a single German submarine that, with its courageous intervention, almost put an end to the mutiny of the High Seas Fleet, which was so fatal for the German Empire. Without much speculation, it can be summarized that the revival of submarine warfare initiated by the Germans in 1919 had a real chance of deciding the First World War victoriously for Germany after all, without the Allies being able to do much about it

What it really looked like: "Undeclared in the field"?

When the guns fell silent at 11 o'clock noon on November 11, 1918, the German front had slowly backed away from the Meuse line, but nowhere had it been seized by panic, nowhere had it been penetrated.

Abandoned by all the gods of fortune since the "Black Day of Amiens" on August 8, 1918, the German army, bereft of supreme leadership and left to its own devices because of supply problems, fought to the last moment in a united front and continued its retreat in squadrons, without turning its back on the enemy and without giving him the way to its flanks.

Fig. 59 Friedrich vonLoßberg
(1868-1942)promoted to major general in August 1917developed a flexible
defense strategy

("defense in depth"), on the basis of which the defense
forcesstaggereddeeper and more complexly

The Allies' losses in this phase of the war were the highest since 1914. Only with difficulty did they push the tenaciously fencing enemy ahead of them in the final days of fighting. In fact, the German retreat in the summer and fall of 1918 was not an escape.

The Germans were still highly capable when it came to killing the enemy. Until the end, those German soldiers who continued to fight and did not voluntarily go into captivity or desert were still better able to kill their opponents than the other way around.

Even in October 1918, the macabre net killing balance of the British was still in the order of about 35300 men in favor of the Germans. Even though the German army no longer had any fortified defensive positions in the immediate vicinity of the front by the end of the war, its retreat to the Meuse-Antwerp line was underway.

On October 31, Friedrich von Lossberg, who had now been promoted to major general, had finally received the necessary powers as chief of staff of the "Duke Albrecht" army group, in order to bring the modern fortifications in Alsace and Lorraine up to scratch as a defense specialist.

Von Lossberg tried to mobilize everything and "surprises" were prepared for the Entente until the last minute.

Thus, after the armistice, the Allies found trains in the Ardennes near Givors with an unknown number of Mark IV loot tanks freshly camouflaged with crayon paint. They were not in retreat, but in transit to the front! The associated tank detachments remain an unsolved mystery to this day.

It is surprising that the trains loaded with valuable tanks were simply left standing in the countryside at the beginning of the armistice. Had secret orders prevented the return transport?

In fact, by the end of 1918, the Allied advance was slowing down. As the Germans approached their homeland, their fighting determination returned.

Later British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain asked his wife just days before the war ended, "How many more men will we have lost in a year?"

On November 7, 1918, the English field chaplain Julian Bickersteth wrote:

The enemy ... is conducting a smart retreat action, and I don't see how we can make him move faster. [...] All of us, perhaps with the exception of the staff officers, who have nothing

of the Germans' fighting style or morale, expect more fighting that will last at least 6 months.

Even the British commander-in-chief, General Douglas Haig, who was still firmly convinced of an Allied victory in August, believed that the German army was capable of retreating to the borders of its own country and holding that line.

Haig was even of the opinion at the end of October 1918 that the Allies were in danger of running out of steam - and this despite the German request for an armistice!

The Allies' fears of a continuation of the war beyond the month of October 1918 and a reversal of the situation had become known to the German OHL through agent reports.

Since General Ludendorff had by then already lost his power to Prince Max of Baden and his foreign minister Solf, the German leadership did not react.

If the war had lasted longer, would the Allies themselves have had to call it a day?

Although the Allies managed to break through the "Hindenburg Line" with the help of captured plans and because of "morale problems" of certain German defenders, leading British generals like Rawlinson considered this a miracle. The Allied advance on a broad front then came to a halt on October 11, 1918.

Between the initiation of the German ceasefire request and the end of the war, several hundred thousand more soldiers had fallen on both sides!

On October 19, more than 2 weeks after the German request for an armistice, the British commander in chief, General Douglas Haig, gave up hope of victory and demanded a negotiated peace.

The French, he said, were "burned out" and would talk cavalierly about not wanting to lose their lives now that peace was in sight. The American army, he said, was not yet properly organized, poorly equipped, half-trained, and with inadequate supply services. The British Army, he said, had never been more efficient than it was at the given time, but it was worn out and

lacked reinforcements. As operational strength declined, however, so must morale. The German Army, on the other hand, was fully capable, if the armistice negotiations failed, of withdrawing intact to its own borders and holding them with the courage of desperation for as long as necessary to stop any attempt to violate German honor. As late as July 18, Haig had expected an Allied victory.

Reception

Two weeks before the end of the war, all the prime ministers and foreign ministers of the Allies had met on October 29, 1918, at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris in the study of Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon. The English Foreign Minister Balfour explained to his colleagues at the time:

... and our troops - with the exception of the Americans - are just as war-weary as the Germans. The red flags of the Germans can set fire to everything in our country.

French censors were ordered to suppress all references to a spreading revolution east of the Rhine.

David Lloyd George added:

Just in the last battles the English and Americans suffered terrible losses. Now the American attack in the Argonne is faltering. Supplies are in complete disarray, and the British have to step in again and again to help.

The French railroad system was already in its final stages before the Allied advance beginning August 8, 1918. France had not produced any new locomotives or cars during the war and had neglected repairs for almost 3 years. Permanently worn-out equipment and far too few and completely overtired personnel were added to the problem.

In this environment, the additional demands of the millions of arriving U.S. soldiers must have seemed like a nightmare, because they were impossible to meet.

The Americans had not only brought their own "Pershing" locomotives across the Atlantic, but also 50,000 members of the "U.S. Transportation Corps", who tried in a shirt-sleeved manner to supply their own troops on the already completely overloaded rail network, even at the expense of the other Allies. As was to be expected, this resulted in tensions with French railroad employees that degenerated into armed combat.

Chaos erupted in full when the Allies advanced into terrain where the Germans had destroyed all railroads and roads during their retreat. The French railroads were vital to the Allied war effort. In the fall of 1918, a

collapse was now looming here, as it had already paralyzed Austria-Hungary and Tsarist Russia. This French rail crisis would have become a major problem for the Allies if the war had continued beyond a fifth winter of war.

The English Minister of the Navy, Lord Fisher, recalls:

A cabinet minister noted after the armistice that the Allies were at the end of their tether when, miraculously, the armistice took place. [...] This was no Waterloo, Sedan or Trafalgar!

French Norman also wrote:

On the day the ceasefire was signed, we were at the end of our rope.

Particularly indicative of the Allied situation here are the roughly 2 million American soldiers who, according to the reading of modern Anglo-American-centered historiography, had decided the war in favor of the Allies.

During a debate in the U.S. Congressional Committee on July 15, 1919, Congressman Johnson put a question to Colonel Huidekoper of the War Department:

JOHNSON: How long could the American Army have lasted in France without substantial changes in the composition of armament, etc.?

HUIDEKOPER: We assumed, especially with regard to the transport conditions, at most 4 months.

JOHNSON: What did the general staff think about that?

HUIDEKOPER: That the transportation situation was so bad that then the American Army could not have been maintained any longer and that if the Germans had not called it a day, the American Army would have had to do it.

This was the situation of the alleged war deciders: The surrender of the Americans to Kaiser Wilhelm II would have taken place in the spring of 1919!

Now it was taking its revenge that, in a gigantic effort, the U.S. had shipped 2 million of its soldiers to France with little more than perfect uniforms and basic light equipment. A big risk!

The whole thing would have been exacerbated by the German Navy's planned revival of submarine warfare starting in 1919.

It seemed that a situation similar to the later British invasion of the Falkland Islands was looming in 1918. On June 14, 1982, the Argentine troops on the islands surrendered to the British forces. Little did they know that shortly thereafter the British themselves would have had to stretch their arms against the Argentines because they had all but run out of ammunition, while the Argentines were still well stocked. In the fall of 1918, the Allies were in a similar situation to the British in the Falklands War - only they were in a much more precarious position.

Germany was undoubtedly in crisis militarily and exhausted. Its allies had dropped out of the war one by one; discord and revolution were fermenting

ever louder in the empire, especially at home and at the stage, while the front seemed to be spared to some extent.

But even during the weeks of armistice negotiations, when German leaders met demand after demand of the Entente, began to clear occupied territories, and ceased submarine warfare, the Allies groaned under the force of German defensive strikes.

Still 2 weeks before the end of the war, the Entente did not know how to proceed. It, too, needed peace - and fast!

In fact, at the conclusion of the armistice in November 1918, the Allies had, in the opinion of the English general Frederick Maurice, reached the extreme limit to which supplies were capable of following. Only the most basic necessities could still be supplied to the troops; in terms of rations, they had only what they were carrying.

By November 11, the furthest advanced soldiers of the 4th Army had moved 50 miles from their last rail supply point; to the north, the 5th Army was 30 miles ahead.

The disastrous roads were often impassable for the motor vehicles of the time, so horses were again used as a means of traction.

This was compounded by incredible chaos, which made the situation even worse. One Canadian anti-aircraft officer blamed Allied headquarters for a fair share of the misery: "Too much whiskey and easy living there. It's just criminal!"

It seemed foreseeable when the Entente would have to cease its rearward movement behind the still intact German army.

A determined German counterattack could have resulted in disaster for the enemy similar to the Russian winter offensive in December 1941 outside Moscow. It therefore seems relatively certain that, if the war had continued, both sides - including the Americans - would have had to come together for an amicable peace. But what now caused the Germans to give up in November 1918 despite the recognized Allied deceptive maneuvers and their increasingly radical demands?

Lloyd George spoke about this with Adolf Hitler on September 4, 1936, at the Berghof on the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden. When they discussed the First World War, Lloyd George said:

At that time their revolution was the last minute help for us. 8 days before, Marshal Haig had submitted a memorandum in which he proved that the Allied armies were now at the end of their strength, but that the German resistance had stiffened to such an extent that there could be no question of liberating the occupied territories and that a continuation of these attacks could be expected in the summer or early summer of 1919 at the earliest. We have

at that time put everything on this one single card of the autumn of 1918.

We put all other transports on hold. The food situation was so critical for us that we ourselves were facing a catastrophe that could occur at any moment - that's when we got the news that a revolution had broken out in Germany.

If there was a kind of "stab in the back," it was the German Revolution. It was the culmination of the "endogenous factor."

Today, Anglo-American-centered historiography likes to "forget" that after the end of the fighting and the delivery of much of the German weaponry, the Allies' ability to dictate the terms of peace had also diminished drastically in the scant six months from November 1918 to March 1919.

Despite the ceasefire, the blockade had initially been tightened. Now also the fishing fleets in the Baltic Sea were not allowed to leave. According to official British figures, about 7,600,000 people died (starved to death!) as a result of the British naval blockade in the period 1914-1918 (300,000 of them in 1918, after all); in the period from the armistice to the Versailles Dictate, another 2,500,000 Germans starved to death; often they were women and children.

Even the Royal Navy showed signs of revolt in maintaining the starvation blockade against Germany, which quickly increased; the British occupation forces in the occupied Rhineland also threatened to disobey because of the many starving German children.

Allied forces shrank from 198 divisions in November 1918 to 39 in June 1919, and Entente commanders-in-chief increasingly doubted that they could gain the upper hand at all in a renewed show of arms against Germany. If Germany attacked now, Marshal Foch declared, it could penetrate deep into France before the United States and Great Britain could

respond.

To secure the situation, U.S. President Wilson even tried a security guarantee for France in June 1919, although it was clear that without the highly dubious approval of the U.S. Senate, this had only psychological value. The Allies therefore had to get the Germans to agree to the unbelievably harsh peace terms yet to be worked out by the Allies. The Entente, despite the armistice, kept one weapon in its hand for this purpose: starvation. On the naval blockade front, they held their ground in order to break any German resistance by starvation. It succeeded.

Did parts of the OHL hinder the possible retreat to rear positions?

It is indisputable that the Allied advance slowed to a halt as the front moved closer to the Meuse River.

This was due, on the one hand, to incredibly high losses of personnel and materiel due to the still strong German defenses, but also to the length and condition of the supply routes. Like the Germans, the Entente was increasingly short of supplies.

Since August 1918, the German railroad construction companies (EBK) had systematically blown up the railroad tracks during their retreat, destroyed stations, dismantled bridges and, as far as possible, salvaged material. A meticulous accounting of dismantling and blasting has been preserved to this day.

Solid railroads, small railroads, nothing escaped destruction. In the area between Perenchies and Ennetieres-en-Weppes (in today's Nord-Pas-de-Calais department), from September 30 to October 20, 1918, 454.598 kilometers of track were destroyed in this way, 6648 linear meters of track were salvaged and, as a special feature, twelve time-delay mines were placed between the rails and in railroad guards' cottages for blasting with a 6-week delay. Especially the time delay mines caused terrible interruptions under the Allied supply traffic.

Almost daily, the Supreme Army Command stressed the importance of a thorough demolition of the railroads. The railroad troops had to do their honor to make it as difficult as possible for the English to follow by sustained destruction.

These destruction measures were so successful that shortly before the armistice the Entente could bring ammunition forward only by horse transport, so that a usual 24-hour transport now required 72 hours.

The official report then spoke of being able to supply only a small vanguard to at least maintain contact with the retreating enemy.

The zone, which could be reached only by animal transport, increased constantly from the beginning of November 1918. According to the official

report of the Allies, this had convinced Marshal Foch that an armistice was also necessary for the Allies!

But now the Germans ended these measures by "higher command," just as success was beginning to set in.

The takeover of the OHL by General Groener had changed everything. On November 1, 1918, a secret order was issued stating that only machine parts were to be removed from machines to be returned. Vehicles were to be assembled in large groups and rendered incapable of running by lighter explosives. The complete destruction of the material was to be avoided.

At the same time, not only did the blasting of rail tracks to be cleared come to an end, but also the German track construction for the acceleration of their own return transports as well as for the supply of the Antwerp-Meuse position, which was under rapid construction.

This sounds like an unbelievable event: the retreat of the German army urgently needed new track construction in order to be able to bring back personnel and material in time and to relieve the important lateral railroad line to Sedan, which was endangered by the American advance.

Also, the area behind the Meuse was underdeveloped in terms of railroads, and the new Antwerp-Meuse position, which had been hastily expanded since mid-October, would not have been militarily sustainable for long without a railroad network.

On November 5, General Groener ordered the army to withdraw to the Antwerp-Meuse position, although 5 days earlier he had forbidden the expansion of the railroad needed there to improve supply routes!

To today's observer, this seems to be nothing more than a clear impediment to the retreat and resistance of the German Army by important parts of its own leadership.

The "stab in the back" or the meaning of the "endogenous factor"

"If the idea of the stab in the back was in itself a legend, the charges it contained were not always false," Gerald D. Feldman, professor of history at Berkeley, opined in 1966 in his standard work on the political, social, and economic history of World War I, published in German in 1985: *Armee, Industrie und Arbeiterschaft in Deutschland 1914 bis 1918*.

In fact, despite the starvation blockade, shortage of raw materials, and constant labor shortage, the Germans managed to provide enough soldiers, weapons, equipment, and supplies for 4 years and 4 months to keep most of the industrial powers of the world at the time at bay.

During this time, they were three times more effective than the Entente in killing the enemy to the last.

By the end of the war, not only had the technological shortcomings of the pre-war period and the first years of the war been made up for, but in the fall of 1918 Germany's technicians were working on revolutionary technology and new types of weapons systems that the Allies would not have been able to counter for the foreseeable future. But Kaiser Wilhelm's "wonder weapons" are as good as forgotten today!

The supply of personnel, which was indispensable for future battles, was also guaranteed until well into 1919, and the oil supply of the empire was also on safe ground.

One problem was the unsatisfactory food situation. Part of the German population was starving. In the summer of 1918, however, Germany had already left the low point of the spring and was able to increase rations. Too little and too late!

As late as June 1918, when the Empire seemed on the verge of victory in the land warfare sector, the British were still considering how to proceed and wanted to take stronger naval action against England. The first English peace feelers appeared on the horizon.

Within a few months, then, it was all over for the Second Reich founded by Bismarck in 1871. In fact, in the fall of 1918, the Allies themselves were

increasingly faced with the need for a negotiated peace with Germany and could hardly believe their luck when a new imperial government surprisingly asked for an armistice on October 4, 1918.

The "endogenous factor", which increasingly weakened the empire, had a decisive effect here, as described above. Thus, it was those Germans in all strata of the population who decided to surrender, desert, strike or sabotage that ended the war in favor of the enemy.

The first "weather light" on the horizon of the empire's downfall was, in the view of wide circles of the military, the so-called "peace resolution" of the majority of the Reichstag. This was passed on July 19, 1917, after an appearance by Matthias Erzberger. The "revolt of the parliamentarians" was already considered a betrayal of the troops by leading generals such as the later Weimar Reichswehr chief Hans von Seeckt in July 1917.

For the former head of German intelligence, Walter Nicolai, it was clear that the war could no longer be won, and that was because only a minority of the people were still loyal to the OHL for its tasks. At the beginning of October 1918, General Ludendorff probably also meant these "majority parties" as the "people who would now have to spoon up the soup".

The rest was then taken care of by weak politicians, questionable business leaders, oath-breaking top officials and an aristocratic ruling class that seemed paralyzed by fear of repeating the fate of their peers in Russia in 1917 and France in 1789 and, like the others, gave up without resistance to the revolutionaries. Otto Dibelius, a highly respected churchman and later chairman of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), said this quite clearly in a sermon in Berlin on May 11, 1919:

A nation that has stabbed its own army in the back, that has abandoned its brothers and sisters in order to extend the hand of peace to its enemies in reckless confidence, a nation that celebrates its terrible defeat with strikes and dances ... such a people deserves a severe judgment from the hands of a just God.

As a later member of the "Confessing Church" in the Third Reich, Dibelius can be considered an unbiased witness.

The army officer in the French Chamber of Deputies, Lieutenant Colonel Jean Fabry, clearly laid out what was at stake in his February 1920

statement to French deputies:

At the end of the war we saw a German army of enormous strength, equipped with excellent material. But what then was the cause of its defeat? It no longer had a united nation behind it, animated by the firm will to make all necessary sacrifices and to continue the war. This war clearly proved that even the strongest army can no longer bring about a success in war if there is no nation behind it that is determined and has the firm will to fight.

In the later Weimar Republic, attempts were made to limit the woolly "stab in the back" concept to the revolutionaries of the High Seas Fleet alone. However, according to the available evidence, this view looks too much like tokenism to prevent further troublesome questions.

A century of lies and brainwashing about the First World War lies behind us. This applies not only to the guilt for the outbreak of the primeval catastrophe of Europe, but also to the "surprising" end of the war. Germany recklessly or even against her better knowledge delivered herself to an opponent who, apart from the satisfaction of low revanchist needs and financial greed, could not give the world a stable peace order.

So it was no wonder that within one generation the next military world catastrophe occurred, if some responsible persons did not intend this from the beginning anyway.

The facts revealed in this book are virtually absent from international historiography. Even Niall Ferguson apparently preferred not to go into details in his mention of the "endogenous factor". His professional critics, who tried to refute his book with all kinds of arguments, did not address this particular thesis with a single syllable - probably in order not to wake any sleeping dogs.

Did a German politician let the truth about the end of the war disappear in fifteen railroad cars?

"Germany was to blame for the outbreak of World War I and faced total defeat in the fall of 1918." This is the message that modern historiography on the First World War proclaims today.

With barely more fuel, weapons, and ammunition, the once fearsome army could have just barely saved itself from superior Allied power.

In fact, an influential circle in Britain had been striving for the military defeat of Germany long before World War I began. They succeeded not only in covering up how it all began, why the mass extermination was unnecessarily and deliberately prolonged, but also what happened at the end of the armistice. Immediately after the end of the war, for example, not only were hundreds of thousands of important documents relating to World War I removed from their countries of origin, taken to the West Coast of the United States and locked away in vaults at Stanford University, but key documents about the course and end of the war were also eliminated.

The secret elite had entrusted this mammoth task of removing incriminating documents from Europe to the 45-year-old mining engineer and later U.S. President Herbert Clark Hoover (1929-1933).

This was made possible by the elite of the Weimar Republic, which was newly washed into power. A few dollars could achieve a lot in the postwar period! No problem for Hoover was to get rid of disturbing documents from Germany. Fifteen carloads left the country, including the "complete secret protocols of the Supreme Army Command" - "a gift" from Germany's first postwar chancellor, Friedrich Ebert (SPD). Hoover wrote of this that Ebert was "a radical without any interest in the work of his predecessors." Also into Hoover's hands came 6,000 volumes of documents from the imperial court, which could shed light not only on the preparations for war but also on the emperor's behavior during the war.

The rest of the German documents saved from extradition to the U.S. were gathered in the Reich Archives in Potsdam and were to be published

from there.

An Allied bombing raid on Potsdam on April 4, 1945 completely destroyed everything, so that today only a few documents have survived in southern German archives in Stuttgart, Munich, Freiburg and Emmendingen. A century of propaganda, lies and brainwashing about the First World War therefore lies behind us.

By the fall of 1918, not only were the Central Powers exhausted from years of struggle, but so were the Allies. Although 60 million soldiers marched, 10 million of whom fell in the trenches, drowned in the sea or perished miserably in burning airplanes, the war did not develop in the direction desired by the secret elite.

Fortunately for the Allies, the German government asked for an armistice on October 3, 1918. This work examined whether Germany was really on the verge of military collapse. The answer is: not at all until the outbreak of the revolution! After that, the Reich would have needed time to put down the revolution.

In the event of a continuation of the struggle without the unilateral armistice offer of October 3, 1918, or a resumption of the war after receiving the brutal Allied armistice terms, Germany would not have automatically faced the end militarily. Instead, the Allies would have had to ask Germany for an amicable peace within a few months. This included the Americans, who would no longer have been able to supply their millions of soldiers in Europe.

This should not be in any textbook today!

Until well into 1917, the German leadership had made the cardinal mistake of foregoing improvements in war technology; they wanted to make up for this in 1918!

It is virtually unknown that if the war had continued beyond November 1918, the Allies would have had little to counter superior German weaponry in 1919/20.

From metal airplanes, giant submarines, stratospheric cannons and transatlantic aircraft to the first radar, an incredible technology gap stretched in favor of the Kaiserreich. All of this is almost reminiscent of later German

futuristic technology at the end of the Third Reich and is reserved for a future work.

The Allies won the war not because they fought better or were stronger, but because Imperial Germany perished due to "endogenous factors."

One hundred years after the end of the war, however, the world should be able to learn the truth about the incredible events.

An otherwise possible settlement peace instead of the Versailles Dictate of 1919 would have spared the world incredible future misery.

CHAPTER 8

The disastrous consequences of the "endogenous factor" to date

Fig. 64

After the German authorities, including the emperor

surrendered the revolution

own country, Allies

all previous promises Versailles

The German representation had almost no say
the terms of peace and surrendered to an almost suicidal
dictate With the Treaty of Versailles however, the fate of the once powerful
Europe was finally

sealed

Robber peace

On November 9, 1918, Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed on the steps of the Reichstag building in Berlin: "The German people have won across the board!"

On the same day, the Berlin "Council of People's Representatives" spoke of Wilson's promise of a peace of reconciliation and understanding without annexations and compensation. The English and French people would congratulate the German on the overthrow of its imperialism. World peace was thus assured for the future.

Full of happiness and optimism, it went on to say that the English fleet had also planted the Red Flag and that the world revolution was marching.

Did the revolutionary German heralds themselves believe in these words, or were they deliberately lying to their audience?

Instead of the "Wilson peace" promised by Allied propaganda and misguided German politicians, disaster struck Germany.

In addition to the 1.8 million war dead and 4.25 million wounded, Germany had suffered other irreplaceable losses that degenerated the country into a second-rate power.

On June 28, 1919, under the pressure of the Allied hunger blockade, Germany's representatives signed the Dictate of Versailles.

For many international military and economic experts, as well as leading politicians, it was nothing less than the attempted enslavement of a great defeated nation and grounds for a future war of retaliation. Not only was Germany economically bankrupt afterwards, but the victors had arbitrarily divided 13 percent of the old Reich territory among neighboring countries. 20 percent of the old production area was lost. 7.325 million Germans became second-class citizens in their new lands. Expulsions on the largest scale followed.

School use from the year 1930)

Generations of German schoolchildren were shown the consequences of the Versailles Dictate with this illustration from the *Geopolitical History Atlas* by Braun and Ziegfeld. After use during the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the early Federal Republic, it is no longer used in the train of modern historical reinterpretation. Instead, today's high school graduates learn that Germany still got away moderately and (too) leniently with the Versailles "Treaty".

Lost natural resources and processing industries included 67 percent of Germany's prewar zinc production, 75 percent of iron ore, and one-third of coal production.

The Allies demanded 12 percent of all German exports with the option to increase this to 25 percent over the next 42 years.

The already severely malnourished German nation had to surrender 1 million cows to the Allies, including 49000 dairy cows, and 15 percent of its crops.

A quarter of the German fishing fleet was confiscated. Vast quantities of timber, 7500 German locomotives and 200000 railroad cars went to the former enemies.

All German colonial property was also divided among the victors.

Every transport ship over 1600 GRT, virtually the entire merchant fleet of the former empire, reinforced the Allied spoils of war.

All German foreign investments and patents were expropriated - probably the biggest technology robbery of all time.

The whole thing ran under the higher moral justification of "liberating Germany from militarism," as former British Prime Minister David Lloyd George celebrated the harsh terms. On another occasion, he conceded:

We got most of the things we wanted to achieve. The German navy has been surrendered, the German merchant fleet has been surrendered, and the German colonies have been surrendered. One of our main trade rivals has been hit hardest, and our allies are about to become Germany's biggest creditors. This is not a bad result!

The Allies crowned their exploitation of Germany when, at the London

Conference on May 5, 1921, they fixed Germany's reparation debt at 132 billion Reichsmarks (RM) - payable in gold-backed currency. At the time, this was the equivalent of 47000 tons of gold, a multiple of the world's total gold reserves. The dictate of Versailles had "only" talked about 20 billion Goldmark reparations. In addition, there was a retroactive payment of 12 billion Reichsmark and another billion in interest.

Originally, according to the 1921 agreement, payment should have been made by 1987. After a pause in payments during the Third Reich, the partly sovereign Federal Republic of Germany undertook at the London Debt Agreement in 1953 not only to assume half of the foreign debt of the German Reich, but also to reimburse the (mostly American) bonds used to finance the Versailles reparations.

John Maynard Keynes noted in his book *The Economic Consequences of the Treaty of Versailles*:

The fixing of a sum far in excess of its ability to pay
and at the pleasure of an outside committee . draws

Germany year after year, and this goes on endlessly.

On the day of reunification, Germany had to issue new bonds on October 3, 1990, to settle outstanding interest payments on age-old Versailles obligations with a term of 20 years. 92 years after the end of World War I, Germany thus settled the last installment from the Versailles Dictate with 200 million euros on October 3, 2010. All of these incredibly harsh gagging measures were carried out by countries whose armies had never set foot on German imperial territory, but who had succeeded in persuading the Germans to surrender in 1918 through the unkept promise of a Wilson reconciliation peace.

Figs. 67 and 68 Two young, dynamic U.S. attorneys, the brothers Allen
Welsh

Dulles (1893-1969, left) and John Foster Dulles (1888-1959),
participated in the negotiations on the Treaty of Versailles. The formulation
Germany's sole guilt was penned by John
Foster. After the two had proved themselves so outstandingly for the purpose of
plundering
door was open
them for a career

in the service of "freedom and democracy" à la the USA. The list of Allen
Dulles' international benefactions goes on and on.
As CIA chief, he was largely responsible for the overthrow of governments
in Iran and

Guatemala, the invasion of Cuba, and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba
(the first democratically elected head of government in the Congo)

In 1953, he initiated the MK ULTRA program, in which people
made docile or covertly poisoned

. After firing President Kennedy for the failed
, he was soon appointed to the dubious

Warren Commission to "investigate" the Kennedy
John Foster later became the U.S. Secretary of State.

The "endogenous factor" and its protagonists had done a great job. This also
applied to their struggle for the adoption and the
Fulfillment of the Versailles conditions.

Of course, for the German population seduced by the revolutionaries
there were not, as solemnly proclaimed on November 9, 1918,
congratulations, international peace or world revolution, but instead
hardship, exploitation and expulsion.

Incredibly, no sooner had the last shots of the war faded than the ominous
announcement of something even worse was made. For many Allied
leaders, what had been achieved was still not enough. They once behaved
like the Roman senator Cato, who, despite a Versailles-like gagging peace
against defeated Carthage after the Second Punic War, publicly demanded at
every available opportunity: "*Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse
delendam!*" ("For the rest, I am of the opinion that Carthage must be

destroyed!"). The next and final Punic War ensued.

Was a "second round" demanded by the victors immediately after the armistice?

Already on the day of the armistice in 1918, Ernst von Weizsäcker wrote in his diary: "This will result in a new war. Our children will have to fight it out."

Italian Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti had the honesty to call the Versailles Treaty a "renunciation of all the principles that the Entente had propagated during the war," a "complete denial of Wilson's >Fourteen Points""

The famous French writer Anatole France also remarked:

The most terrible of all wars resulted in a peace treaty, which is not a treaty of peace, but the continuation of war.

Europe will perish if it does not choose reason as its advisor.

Fig. 69 German hatred must continue after the World War:
English propaganda poster against any resurgence of German trade

World War I was never about the abolition of monarchies or even about the self-determination of peoples. Instead, the Entente's goals could only be achieved through war, Germany's goals only without war, as Kaiser Wilhelm II lamented in exile in Holland.

The goal of preventing a strong central power in Europe, which the British elite had been striving for since 1871, was achieved for the time being with the armistice of November 1918.

Somehow, many high-ranking winners were still not satisfied with what they had achieved.

As Richard K. Moore wrote, World War I was the epochal event that set in motion an ascertainable program to establish a new world order, a single, global hierarchy under the control of the financial elite, and yet remained unfinished.

While the Europeans were slaughtering each other by the millions, the Americans experienced a period of upswing from 1917 onwards, which led to the Golden Twenties there.

Although Great Britain seemed at first glance to have won the battle for Europe in 1918, America had won the title of the most powerful and, above all, the richest nation in the world. The USA had seized almost 50 percent of the world's gold.

Germany, until 1914 the strongest military power on the European continent, was crushed and deprived of its economic supremacy. Nevertheless, as early as 1919, the respected *Times* said:

If Germany starts trading again in the next 50 years, we will have fought this war for nothing.

There was also an unfinished business between the Western Allies and Russia and Germany, as there was a danger that the two countries might come to an understanding between themselves, or even form an economic

union, which the countries financed by the banking elite would have had nothing to oppose.

Lenin wrote:

Peace was imposed on Germany, but it was a peace of usurers and strangler, a peace of butchers, because Germany and Austria were plundered, dismembered. They were deprived of all means of subsistence, let the children starve and die of hunger. This is a monstrous peace of robbery!

After World War I, the victorious powers, the United States, France and Great Britain, began to create a belt of buffer states between Germany and Russia - the term "cordon sanitaire" had been introduced into the political discussion by the then French Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon from the epidemic issue.

But despite all the sacrifices, the state for which the global elite had waged war had not been reached: Not one shot had yet been fired at Germany. This omission was hotly debated in postwar Allied military circles. The Allied commander-in-chief in France, French Marshal Foch, had stated in this regard:

The peace that France needs can only come after complete
Destruction and disintegration of Germany will be concluded.

Fig. 70 Reich Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau at the Genoa
in April 1922, where France secretly tried - albeit
-incite Russia to demand reparations from Germany

Fig. 71 Reich Chancellor Wirth at a meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister

Tschitscherin (with portfolio) in Rapallo Italy

. In the peace treaty concluded, both sides renounced all mutual claims from the World War

Across the Channel, the founder of the modern Royal Navy, 1st Sea Lord "Jacky" Fisher, wanted to see Berlin ravaged and sacked, and English brigadier generals complained that the job had not yet been finished. The Americans expressed similar sentiments. Thus, in 1923, U.S. World War II Supreme Commander General John J. Pershing conversed with his former aide-de-camp Thomason.

THOMASON: But General, those Germans could still have turned out to be tough as nails once they got close to the Rhine. They still had a lot of good soldiers at their disposal. I know they didn't use blanks on the morning of the armistice when I stumbled across the pontoons lying under heavy fire across the Meuse.

PERSHING: Some would actually have continued to fight until we marched into Berlin as an army on the street "Unter den Linden" with flags and trumpets.

THOMASON: But there would certainly still have been a great deal of sniper fire from the roofs of the "Unter den Linden". I saw how they had mounted machine guns on the Brandenburg Gate later [during the revolutionary battles for Berlin in 1919]!

PERSHING: Yes, and we would have taken them out and hung them on the lampposts "Unter den Linden" to show the Germans that we had won the war. The Germans are told that the people had abandoned the armies. In Berlin, no one knows that they were defeated. It will have to be done all over again.

The fact that the 52-month First World War had already directly destroyed 12 percent of Europe's prime-aged men did not seem to matter. In fact, no sooner had the slaughter ended than the victors were already thinking of a "second round" for the final destruction of Germany. Clemenceau said in June 1921:

The war was only the preparation, the annihilation of the German people starts only now! [...] There are 20 million Germans too many in Europe!

Emmanuel Reichenberger showed that there was an elaborate plan behind it. The leading Sudeten German priest, who also became known as the "Red Chaplain," quoted a revealing statement made by the future U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932. Reichenberger, who later became Papal Secret Chamberlain and a German patriot, was on the Reich Security Main Office's "Special Wanted List GB" in 1940 as a convinced Nazi opponent and was probably completely free of sympathies for the Third Reich. Roosevelt said to Reichenberger:

I will crush Germany! There will be no Germany after the war.

Bernard Lecache, president of a world religious league, also proclaimed in Paris in 1932:

Germany is our public enemy number one. It is our business to declare war on it without mercy.

Hitler and his NSDAP were not even in power in 1932. Instead, the elected politicians of the democratic Weimar Republic ruled. Here is proof that the next war against Germany would have come about even without Hitler.

The real concern of Anglo-American elites was to impose their understanding of geopolitics.

The "unfinished" First World War thus necessitated, in the opinion of people like Pershing or Roosevelt, a Second World War against Germany, for the destruction of its state, its conception of economic ethics, its technology, and its way of life, which were seen as a danger by the authoritative international elites. "This is not peace," Marshal Foch had announced to officer students at St. Cyr after the Versailles peace dictate, "but an armistice for the next 20 years!"

Von Weizsäcker and Foch were tragically right! The lightning struck twice! In 1945, Allied soldiers were to hold joint parade marches in the ruins of Berlin at the end of the "second round".

Did the "endogenous factor" also play a fateful role in the outbreak of World War II?

In September 1939, another devastating war swept the world. The Second World War was to last 2 years longer than the "first round" and claim even more victims.

In fact, there are indications that the "endogenous factor" of 1918 may also have been indirectly decisive for the outbreak of World War II. This includes, among other things, the question of why Poland did not want to reach an agreement with Germany in the summer of 1939, but virtually considered war a necessity.

At the last minute, on August 30, 1939, German diplomats and lawyers had drafted the "Marienwerder 16-Point Plan" as a fair basis for discussion with Poland. When Poland refused to accept this "last-minute negotiating proposal" at all, the English special envoy George Ogilvie-Forbes was instructed by London to hand over the "16-point plan" to Poland's Ambassador Lipski in the Polish representation in Berlin on August 31. Lipski, however, refused to accept it on the grounds:

In the event of war, civil unrest will break out in Germany and Polish troops will march on Berlin.

Within the first 3 days after the outbreak of war, a domestic political upheaval would eliminate the government in Germany and open the way for the Poles to Berlin; of this they were convinced not only in Warsaw but also in London and Paris.

What today seems to be an unbelievable misjudgement of reality by the Polish ambassador was not an isolated case!

Immediately after the outbreak of war, the British Prime Minister Chamberlain had confided to his diary on September 10, 1939:

What I hope for is not a military victory - I doubt very much that this is possible - but a collapse of the German internal front.

French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet also wrote in his memoirs:

We expected a quick and easy victory, thinking that the declaration of war by England and France on September 3 would clear the way for a military coup that we had been so firmly promised.

U.S. Ambassador Joseph Kennedy cabled Washington on September 4, 1939, about his final conversation with British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax:

What Britain needs more than anything else before the world collapses is an internal collapse of Germany.

When Mussolini tried to convene an armistice and peace conference September 5, 1939 Germany and France agreed, but England imposed unfulfillable conditions, for Prime Minister Chamberlain was fatally still waiting for the promised general coup, from which he expected a quick victory for the Allied cause without having to fire a shot

These messages came from the circle of the German resistance movement.

Since 1937, a German conspiratorial circle around Leipzig Mayor Carl Goerdeler, Secretary of State Ernst von Weizsäcker, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, Erich and Theo Kordt, and Hans Boehm-Tettelbach had sought frequent contacts with high-ranking British politicians and Foreign Office officials under the shielding of Abwehr Chief Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. In the process, they were urged to take military action against Germany: A war would solve the problems within a few days.

In addition, they reported on allegedly catastrophic economic conditions in the Reich, Hitler was unpopular and hated, and the Wehrmacht was ready for a coup in the event of an Allied declaration of war. The workers were nervous and doubting their allegiance to their subjects; the majority of the educated were more hostile than ever to the regime. As late as the morning of August 30, 1939, Major Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin falsely informed the British military attaché in Berlin of the allegedly explosive internal situation in Germany, adding, "Pass it on to Warsaw!" This is where an

"endogenous factor 2.0" comes into play. It had worked in 1918, and now the Allies were promised a repetition on the part of high-ranking German conspirators, if only war would first be declared on Germany by the Western powers!

Despite the warnings of the British ambassador Sir Neville Henderson, who was well informed from his own sources, about the true situation in Germany and the implausibility of the conspirators, the governments in Paris and London, just like the Poles, were only too happy to rely on an "endogenous factor 2.0" similar to the one in 1918.

The fact that the excellent Polish military espionage taking place at the same time in the territory of the Reich showed quite different results had no influence on the wishful thinking of the Polish leadership.

Thus, at about 9 p.m. on August 31, 1939, Warsaw scornfully rejected the moderate "16 points" Hitler then announced on the radio and called to arms, whereupon the Wehrmacht crossed the Polish border in the early morning of September 1.

Misled by such promises, the Polish leadership fatally saw itself in a stronger position than it really was.

The Polish Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly allegedly already had an oil painting made of himself in the summer of 1939, showing him on horseback in full gala uniform as a victorious commander under the Brandenburg Gate.

Paris and London consequently declared war on the Reich on September 3, 1939, but the hope that this would trigger a collapse of Germany's internal front similar to that of 1918 was to turn out to be a terrible failure: Nothing happened!

Polish lancers died fighting German tanks without ever having crossed the German border. On September 29, 1939, the capital Warsaw fell into the hands of the Wehrmacht. Poland had lost.

Germany learned of these fatal events at the end of September 1939 after files were found in Polish ministries and later, in 1940, supplemented from French loot.

Analysis of the secret files captured from German armored scout cars on a railroad train near Charite-sur-Loire revealed numerous references to persons of German nationality who had supplied French intelligence with

information. Among them were two or three traitors in high military or official positions. What was missing, however, were the decoded plain names.

Colonel Oscar Reile, a leading German intelligence specialist in the West, then determined in his evaluation that these people could not have had a radio reporting channel or functioning courier service, since their reports became rare after the outbreak of war. This would point to the group of people mentioned above, since their ability to travel abroad had become immensely more difficult after the war began. Admiral Canaris had the files locked away!

Thus, the false hopes of the Allied elites for a promised repetition of the "endogenous factor" as in 1918 were partly responsible for 50 million deaths which the "second round" 1939- 1945 was to claim.

For whom the First World War was worthwhile

On the day of the armistice, Clemenceau's daughter tried to cheer up the president: "Tell me dad that you are happy." He replied, "I can't say that because I'm not. Everything will be useless!"

For the Western Allies, November 11, 1918, remains a solemn, almost sacred date to this day. For them, it is the memory of the end of the fighting that had destroyed an entire generation, but also, at the same time, the memory of the military victory and total collapse of their principled opponents: the German Empire, the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire.

Armistice Day was and still is a central identity-forming narrative of Anglo-Saxon-centered historiography. Many historians therefore find it difficult to question the numerous legends that have grown up around it.

It is certain that all warring parties were completely exhausted by the end of 1918.

What is forgotten by the celebrants of our days is that the end of the war in the true sense did not bring real peace. Not only the defeated were to suffer from their defeat, but the entire European order was to collapse.

In reality, November 11, 1918, created the basis for violence unthinkable before 1914, for rebellion and a deeply unstable equilibrium.

Europe had once been the world's leading power. Between 1492 and 1914, Europeans conquered 84 percent of the world's territory. That was now over, and things only went downhill from 1918 onward.

Peace conferences after the armistice, striving for robbery and retaliation, did not help, nor did the failed attempt at a new world order, called the "League of Nations".

Fig. 72 This map of Europe from 1919 shows a clearly noticeable result
First World War: hunger. Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia
Serbia and Armenia were the hardest hit But even the
"winners" did not fare much better No data
but many Germans starved to death, even after the war
as a result of England's blockade tactics

Instead, the outcome of the "war to end all
" as the Entente propaganda liked to call the First World
War destroyed without replacement

since 1648

From 1618 to 1648, Europe had suffered the demonstration of total war for the first time since antiquity with the Thirty Years' War. The Peace of Münster ended this dark period of mutual annihilation with a new peace order that laid the foundation for Europe's rapid resurgence and also world domination.

A viable system of sovereign states emerged under non-interference with mutual recognition. Wars continued to be waged, but always under the primacy of diplomacy and only with limited objectives, while respecting the maintenance of the old peace order. Religious particularities were tolerated internationally just as monarchies and republics could coexist.

The system of the Peace of Westphalia made Europe prosperous, great and powerful. It was so successful that it survived all the storms of the centuries, such as the French Revolution or the Napoleonic Wars - but not the armistice of November 11, 1918 and the submission treaties named after Parisian suburbs for the defeated central powers.

Things could and should have been different: After the Napoleonic Wars, which had been devastating for Europe, the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna on June 9, 1815, had already succeeded in establishing a peace order that was reconcilable even for defeated France. It had given Europe a stable foundation - until 1914.

Although Germany had ended the war in 1918, still deep in enemy territory, of its own accord and without having been clearly defeated militarily, there was neither compensation nor leniency for the enemy, who was almost alone in valiantly resisting the entire industrialized world to the

very end; not even real negotiations were allowed to take place - neither before the armistice nor at the Versailles Conference in 1919.

The guiding principle of the Versailles Dictate, signed on June 28, 1919, was based on a completely new concept, namely the principle of Germany's sole guilt in the war. The enemy was now no longer portrayed as "Justus hostis" (enemy with equal rights), as it had been earlier after the Peace of Westphalia, but as the embodiment of evil. It

was, according to the victors, the victory of law and civilization against barbarism.

After the Peace of Westphalia, the defeated enemy could become a subsequent ally; this was no longer possible now that the defeated were considered guilty and criminals.

The enemy was not only defeated (although this was objectively not so convincing militarily in 1918), but had to be punished and sanctioned. For the defeated, in addition to the most brutal losses of territory, there were unpayable reparations, civil wars, pogroms and expulsions. After the armistice, 100,000 Germans of category C alone were expelled from Alsace-Lorraine within a short time. The right bank of the Rhine was to remain occupied by the Entente for 15 years.

Important territories were torn from the motherland: Danzig, West Prussia, the Memel region, Poznan and Upper Silesia, Hulschin, Northern Silesia, Eupen-Malmedy and Alsace-Lorraine. All German colonies were distributed among the victorious powers.

It could have been even worse if Holland's government had not rejected the proposal of the U.S. Secretary of State to annex East Frisia and the Emsland. 70580 square kilometers of land and 295602 square kilometers of colonial territory were thus stolen! By the way, Article 212 of the Versailles Dictate stipulated that in case of "so much crime" and "clear guilt", Kaiser Wilhelm II and other German leaders should also be tried. The same conception of war prevailed at the end of World War II and still applies in the 21st century in "just wars" called "humanitarian actions" or "foreign missions."

Even though the Entente powers sang a song of triumph at the end of the First World War, which even today is solemnly echoed in the mass media at the commemorations of the armistice on November 11, 1918, they did not emerge unscathed from this huge mass grave, the most gigantic in history up to that time.

In fact, the victors of World War I had paid a price for the defeat of Germany and its allies that was far greater than the value of all their gains: a price so high that very soon they were no longer able to hold most of those gains. Britain and France had lent enormous sums to the Tsar, but after the

October Revolution Lenin no longer paid the debts of his hated predecessor.

Italy was broke after its victory over Austria-Hungary.

France owed the USA and Great Britain around \$3 billion each. In many respects, France has still not recovered from the biological bloodletting of the "4 years and 4 months.

As late as the end of March 1918, Marshal Foch, now appointed "Coordinator of the Allied Armies," had saved the chaotically retreating British from collapse by the new commander-in-chief ruthlessly throwing his own troops, without their artillery, against the increasingly weary Germans.

Russia, which as England's continental sword was to overrun the Germans like a steamroller in 1914-1917, lay defeated on the ground and sought its way out in Bolshevism.

Although the British elite had succeeded in 1914 in launching a systematically planned world war against their rival Germany, winning the war proved to be more difficult and expensive than expected. At the end of the war, England owed the United States the then astronomical sum of \$4.7 billion. It had taken just over 4 years to sell off to the U.S. the assets of the British colonial empire that had been accumulated over hundreds of years.

Britain's share of world trade fell from 14.2 percent in 1913 to 10.8 percent in 1929. Already during the war, the U.S. and Japan had snatched up significant British core markets!

Trickily, the businessmen of the British upper class had planned to distribute the costs of the war according to some scale after a hoped-for entry of the USA into the war, i.e. in reality to be able to pass them on to the new ally.

However, the US bankers, who were up to all the tricks of the trade, made sure that the USA's entry into the war would not be able to destroy their claims, and they sent England the bill in 1923. If England was threatened with national bankruptcy before the outbreak of war in 1914, things looked much worse for the decadent elites of the United Kingdom after the conclusion of peace.

Virtually no debtor country saw itself in a position to pay its debts accumulated in the struggle against Germany.

Since the victorious powers, with the exception of the U.S., were all

insolvent, the U.S. government "selflessly" saw to it at the end of the war that Germany was condemned to pay reparations in the dictatorial peace of Versailles. These monies, however, did not go to the war victims of these countries, but had to be immediately forwarded by the governments in London, Paris and Rome to the U.S. banks to settle the outstanding loans there. Wall Street's restraint and greed did not end there, however: since Germany, of course, could not pay,

U.S. banks again extended loans - this time to the (defeated!) enemy.

The liquidation of the proud British Empire as a result of World War I was now inevitable. The Dominions began to administer themselves.

Fig. 74 J.P. "Jack" Morgan Jr. (1867-1943, here buying war
) repeatedly saved the Allies with large loans and made
a fortune during the First World War. After the "won" war, England and
France
been bankrupt. Germany was
asked to pay to save Europe - a model
that was to set a precedent.

The colonial peoples of the world had also not failed to notice the sophistication with which their "white masters" had destroyed each other and how vulnerable their alleged superiority really was. The clock for the end of colonial rule began to tick inexorably from 1918 and could no longer be stopped.

Although the U.S. seemed to emerge from the world conflagration as the absolute winner in economic and power terms, there was soon widespread disappointment among U.S. citizens about the warmongers in their own country and the quarreling, ungrateful victor nations. This led to isolationism by 1941.

But, as in the story of the sorcerer's apprentice, it was no use, and after the successful intervention in the First World War, one could never really withdraw from the new role of the world policeman intervening everywhere.

In the 21st century, the completely overstretched superpower USA now seems to be inexorably presented with the bill for the commitments it has made since 1917. A late triumph of Kaiser Wilhelm II?

Fig. 75 One of the biggest war profiteers was Samuel Prescott Bush (1863-1948), who sold weapons and munitions to both warring parties through Remington Arms and other arms companies. From a small railroad he became a multimillionaire and laid the foundation of the fortune of the later Bush presidential family. Remington Arms was indicted by the Nye Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1934 as a "merchant of death" for its war profits. Coincidentally, most of the records and correspondence of the government department dealing with Bush arms were burned to "make room" in the National Archives.

J.P. Morgan banking house, a self-serving savior of the Entente and a shining war profiteer, was also grilled by incorruptible U.S. Senate investigating in the postwar period precisely because of this role. Quickly lost its leadership position to the Rockefeller banking house. When J. P. Morgan Sr. died in 1913, it had already emerged that 75 percent of his banking house was in fact owned by Rothschild.

The brutal total war had taken only a little more than 4 years to destroy worldwide, alongside the old order, the achievements of a century of stable ecological and cultural progress. The golden age of the European bourgeoisie with its rapid growth, minimal taxes, full employment based on stability, growing trade and free flow of capital with gold-backed currencies was irrevocably over.

More recent research then also speaks of the fact that in the post-war period, although demographically tiny, it was possible to replace the approximately 10 million lives on both sides that the senseless First World War had claimed. However, this did not always apply to their professional skills.

Thus, the young German elites were extraordinarily weakened by the bloodletting of the battles: Of the men born between 1860 and 1890, 6 percent died on the battlefield, but of those born between 1890 and 1900, 16 percent died, and the percentage was even twice as high among students and

academics. 32 percent of the German intellectual young elite fell for Kaiser and Fatherland! Their sacrifice was in vain, as was that of all other war dead of the "European catastrophe".

Since November 11, 1918, the "good old days" were only a memory, not only in defeated Germany, but in the whole civilized world.

The French social philosopher Georges Sorel was quite clear:

This war was a horrible catastrophe that destroyed everything still worth living in Europe and plunged the modern world into a process of dissolution.

After the armistice, greed, arrogance and many other sinister motives took the reins.

Shortly after the guns fell silent on the continent bleeding from all wounds, leading figures of the Allies spoke, as said, of the necessity of a "second pass"!

Making the world "safer for democracy," the justifying war goal of many Entente supporters, also proved to be a chimera, as the number of democracies declined rapidly after 1918/19 until 1939, when a number similar to that at the outbreak of war in 1914 was reached.

All that could be achieved worldwide after the privations of the more than 4 years of war was a collective life of pleasure, which as the "wild twenties" was to lead to a short-term illusory blossoming. After their failure, the crash of the unstable world into the next catastrophe became inevitable. Already at the end of the 1920s, the worldwide rearmament began - long before Hitler came to power!

Even after the even more destructive Second World War 1939-1945 - as a direct result of the "first round" - the world did not find a stable peace.

The Cold War period was followed from 1990 onward by the bloody and financially ruinous attempt of the USA to create a one-world order under its leadership. The foundations for this would have been unthinkable without people like J. P. Morgan or Woodrow Wilson.

In order to pave the way for unhindered global plundering, national structures had to disappear as a result of the First World War. In 1914, the initial aim was to destroy the three great dynasties on the European continent.

Cardinal John Murphy Farley, Archbishop of New York, commented on this at the World Eucharistic Congress in Lourdes, July 22-26, 1914:

The war in preparation will be a struggle between international capital and the ruling dynasties. Capital desires to have no one over it, knows no God or Lord, and wants all states to be ruled as a great banking business. Its profit shall become the sole guide of the rulers. Business only and only.

French revolutionary syndicalist Edouard Berth (1875-1939) wrote:

This war of plutocrats was truly abominable in the truest sense of the word: abominable in all its processes, abominable in all its procedures, abominable in its ideology, abominable in its soul and body.

So it is not surprising that today the crises at the fault lines of the First World War - in the Near and Middle East, in Ukraine and in North Africa - have broken out again, because the problem was neither solved nor rehashed in 1918. That was never the intention! The warmongers of today are, as in 1914 and 1939, coldly calculating, power-obsessed and inhuman hasards. They are to be found among speculative bankers and owners of armaments conglomerates, above all in the transnational corporations and transnational capital.

So there are again warnings, weather flashes and foreshocks of a disaster that, as once before 1914, hardly anyone can imagine. The event is not inevitable, yet it is probable.

Now in the 21st century, the endless wars of the infrastructurally and economically largely degenerate USA have led to a flood of returning coffins that raise questions, according to Willy Wimmer, once state secretary of the German Defense Ministry. The U.S. military apparatus, he said, has taken on such dimensions that it is impossible to bring the "boys home" without having to think of a subsequent military dictatorship or a new edition of a "stab in the back" legend. One thing, however, is certain, according to Wimmer: Without the return of the United States of America to international law and without the abandonment of the policy as it has also been practiced toward Germany since 1871, the world will blow up in our faces.

In doing so, he uncovered an interesting parallel: Just as the Central Powers in 1918 trusted in a just peace according to Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and laid down their arms, the Soviet leadership in 1990 believed it could trust in the stipulations in the "Two-plus-Four Treaties" for the reunification of Germany, according to which NATO was under no circumstances to be extended eastward beyond the Oder as the Polish-German border.

The Russians withdrew from Eastern Europe. Today NATO is in the Baltic States. Everything was a lie.

At the end of the First World War, the gates of hell opened on November 11, 1918! To this day, no one has closed them again.

APPENDIX

Kaiser Wilhelm's Secret Weapons: Fable or Reality?

In the years between the founding of the German Empire in 1871 and the outbreak of World War I, German industry experienced a massive increase in its industrial capacity that was unparalleled, together with the heyday of the German Empire.

Steel production thus rose from 98 million tons in 1894 to 188 million tons in 1913. Furthermore, in the 1890s, Germany had not only developed a world-leading chemical industry, but also achieved almost unattainable leading positions in the fields of radio, electrical engineering, motorization and almost all other future developments.

Ironically, much of this technology was viewed with the greatest suspicion in the aristocratic and conservative officer circles that dominated the German military command structure until the early years of the war. By the middle of World War I, when it became clear that the Allies were leading not only in quantity but also in technology, a rethinking began.

In the years 1917-1918, the courageous German developers and engineers were thus given a completely free hand. Despite the lack of raw materials and the naval blockade, revolutionary weapons such as transatlantic aircraft, giant submarines, metal aircraft and stratospheric guns were created on their drawing boards. Even the first radars and invisible planes were tested. The world's first guided missiles were launched from Zeppelin airships, and the Royal Navy faced attacks from sinister long-range guided missiles off the Belgian coast. Instead of the feared mass deployment, they suddenly disappeared.

Although some things still went to the front by 1918, the delay could no longer be made up. The armistice of November 1918 thus became an expression of German defeat.

Could the last German developments have vouched for a German victory in a possible extension of the war to 1919/20?

Are reports true that speak of conspicuous disabilities in some attempted operations in the last months of World War I?

Had the victorious Western powers really had everything handed over to

them after the end of the war, or had the Germans been able to hide a lot beforehand?

The fact is that many of the futuristic German weapons and equipment of 1917-1918 later reappeared in perfected form in the arsenals of the Third Reich.